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CHARLES HODGE: EVANGELICAL MYSTIC

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Patrick Wesley Curles  
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For the glory of God

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

American Presbyterianism has anything but a monolithic expression. Someone once described Presbyterianism as being akin to riding on a bus, and every seat has a brake pedal. Everyone has a voice, and his or her expression of that voice in the church cannot be ignored or easily overruled. American Presbyterians have exercised this ecclesiastical muscle vigorously over the years, and the result is a form of Presbyterianism today that is as varied as the American landscape.

Attempts to categorize and understand the development of American Presbyterianism have generally fallen into two camps. The first frames history using a theological opposition of orthodox versus liberal. This construct traces the development of the American Presbyterian Church from the Old Side/New Side split, through the Old School/New School split, up to the current divide of theological conservatives/theological liberals using theological categories and litmus tests to explain the current state of the church. More recent attempts are more nuanced but have generally focused on the role of the church in society. Using the spirituality of the church as the lens through which history is viewed, American Presbyterianism is viewed as a perpetual tug of war between those who would retain the spirituality of the church and the “two kingdoms” model of the church/state relationship, and those who see the church as primarily an agent of cultural change.

No single approach can fully explain the story of American Presbyterianism. While these approaches are correct and helpful, I believe that there is another facet to the story and another lens through which to view this history. Broadly speaking, it is ecclesiology. More narrowly, it is Christian spirituality: the essence of the Christian life.

Imbedded in Hodge's lifelong defense of historic Presbyterianism, several themes emerge that, taken together, make him noteworthy, not only for his theology (he once boasted that he has never had an original thought), nor his polity (his Presbyterianism was thoroughly applied, but not unique), but in his pastoral ecclesiology and reformed spirituality. "The Pope of Presbyterianism" is not generally known for his pastoral theology and spirituality. But it only stands to reason that if Hodge is the church's standard of Presbyterian orthodoxy in matters of theology and church polity, his views of pastoral ecclesiology and spirituality would be equally emblematic for Presbyterians. Hodge never pastored a church and his life's work was not devoted to the spiritual formation of individual souls through the ministry of a local church. We can surmise, however, from Hodge's other work what that ministry would have looked like.

Of particular note in this regard is Hodge's work *The Way of Life*. Among Hodge's vast works, this little book provides perhaps the clearest glimpse into Hodge's spirituality. Written to explain the essentials of Christianity to young people, *The Way of Life* was widely received across denominational lines, socio-economic strata, and educational levels. In it, Hodge summarizes the Christian life simply: "The secret of holy living lies in this doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Hodge (1797-1878) stands uniquely in history as a bridge from the theology of the Reformation to American Presbyterianism. Hodge's primary influences and links to the Reformation are fairly clear: Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), Francis Turretin (1623-1687), and John Calvin (1509-1564) to name the most obvious. Hodge is widely viewed as the culmination of the best of reformation theology combined with the classical training and intellectual rigor of nineteenth century American scholasticism. But as the "Pope of Presbyterianism," he is also viewed as embodiment of American Presbyterianism's ideals. Hodge, therefore, is uniquely positioned in history to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 229.



demonstrate the ideals of Presbyterian spirituality as an expression of Presbyterianism's theology.

### **Thesis**

Hodge's spirituality can best be seen in his theology of sanctification. Some traditions term this area of theology "spiritual formation" or "the Christian life." Hodge called it "Holy Living" in his book *The Way of Life*. Hodge says that the essence of sanctification is "a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God."<sup>2</sup> Hodge, the emblematic Presbyterian of American Presbyterianism, has a theology of sanctification and the Christian life that is directly linked to John Calvin and the Westminster Standards and therefore can provide a corrective influence on current Presbyterian misunderstandings of sanctification in the church today. Hodge's articulation of sanctification as "a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God"<sup>3</sup> may sound close to mysticism; I believe, however, that Hodge is uniquely positioned to articulate the "purest" form of Presbyterian sanctification. My thesis is that his view is the purest form of Presbyterian sanctification theology because it is the most immediate and direct line to Westminster and Calvin.

### **Methodology**

My methodology will be to examine and organize Hodge's theology of sanctification into four chapters: first, what sanctification is not; second, the preliminary or accompanying graces of sanctification; third, the essence of sanctification; and, fourth, the means of sanctification. In each of these chapters, I will then examine Hodge's theology for evidence of direct descendancy from John Calvin and The Westminster

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<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

Standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Larger Catechism, and the Shorter Catechism.

### **Who Is Charles Hodge?**

Charles Hodge (December 27, 1797-June 19, 1878) was a Reformed Presbyterian theologian and principal of Princeton Theological Seminary between 1851 and 1878. He was raised in a traditional Presbyterian home and was taught the Westminster Catechism from an early age. His family moved New Jersey to attend a classical academy and then, later, Princeton College where his former pastor, Ashbel Green, and recently become president. As Charles prepared to enter the college, Princeton Theological Seminary was being established by the Presbyterian Church as a separate institution for training ministers in response to a perceived inadequacy in the training ministers were receiving at the university as well as the perception that the college was drifting from orthodoxy.

At Princeton, the first president of the new seminary, Archibald Alexander, took a special interest in Hodge, and became a lifelong mentor of Hodge. Hodge later named his first son after Alexander, Archibald Alexander Hodge, who became an influential professor and churchman in his own right. In 1815, during a time of intense religious fervor among the students encouraged by Green and Alexander, Hodge joined the local Presbyterian Church and decided to enter the ministry. He graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1819. Eventually Hodge succeeded his mentor as Professor of Theology at Princeton.

Although Hodge is best known for his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, his teaching career at Princeton, and his churchmanship in the polity of the Presbyterian Church, Hodge's greatest influence was likely through a very simple work entitled *The Way of Life*. A work he completed for the American Sunday School Union as a primer on theology for young students. It was a book that found immediate success, and

although Hodge did not profit much from the book personally, it was the most successful and widely circulated book he ever wrote. More importantly, it gave Hodge an opportunity to present his thinking and theology on Christianity in a synthesized way to the widest possible audience. It was widely acclaimed as a beautiful summary of Protestantism stated simply and clearly as “light suffused with love.”<sup>4</sup>

Central to this work is how Hodge ends his work on “holy living” or the “religious life.” In this last section, Hodge takes all the theology proper in the first part of the book and links it to the practical acceptance of the faith and its out working in the life of the believer. In this work and in his *Systematic Theology* Hodge’s complete and most accessible theology on sanctification or the Christian life is presented.

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<sup>4</sup> Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge: Professor in the Theological Seminary* (Princeton, NJ New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1880), 334ff.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT SANCTIFICATION IS NOT

Before Hodge goes into great detail about the nature of sanctification, he takes some time to dissuade his readers from misapprehensions about the nature of the Christian life. He does so in both of his major treatments on sanctification: *The Way of Life* and his *Systematic Theology*. The fact the Hodge takes so much space to do so is unique in his theological work and points to this consistent theme in Hodge's theology: true sanctification is the defining characteristic of authentic Christian faith. For Hodge, correct theology is ubiquitous and rational. Christianity is not only correct; it is logical and comports with reality. Therefore, the only way to distinguish true and authentic faith and true spiritual life is in sanctification. It makes sense, then, that Hodge wants to define clearly what sanctification is not before he defines what it is. There are three things in particular that Hodge says sanctification is not.

#### **Sanctification is not the same as conversion**

While it may seem simplistic and unnecessary to say, Hodge nevertheless takes the time to state at length that the Christian life is not equivalent to conversion. Conversion is not the whole of the Christian life any more than birth is the whole of physical life. Conversion is just the beginning; sanctification, the Christian life, or "holy living," as he sometimes calls it, is whole of life lived after the soul is given new life through conversion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 236.

In doing so, Hodge is making the theological distinction between union to and communion with Christ, or initial union and ongoing union with Christ. For Hodge, initial union is affected by the Holy Spirit through the graces of faith and repentance; and sanctification is simply the ongoing development of that union between the believer and Christ. “It is a participation in the divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God.”<sup>2</sup>

At the outset, Hodge’s approach is somewhat different from many approaches today that place the emphasis of Christianity on conversion. For Hodge, the emphasis in the Christian life is clearly on communion and not union. Communion with God is the great goal of salvation and the redemptive plan, not union. Union, conversion, or justification is simply the first step in a necessary joining that enables the restoration of the person to God. That restoration is only begun in union and is continues on until completion in heaven. Seeing the Christian life as these two phases is characteristic of Calvin and Westminster as well.

### **Holy Spirit and Union with Christ in the Theology of John Calvin**

John Calvin is the first great systemizer of Protestant theology and the head stream for most Protestant theological systems. It is significant, then, that union with Christ is central to his theology, particularly in salvation. Todd Billings is correct in summarizing,

the themes of union and communion with God are not an afterthought for Calvin but provide the basic imagery and structure for key motifs in his soteriology. Calvin did not abandon them in the course of his theological development, but he made increasingly emphatic and extensive additions on this theme in various editions of the Institutes, his occasional works, and his commentaries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

<sup>3</sup> J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 50.

Indeed, the images of union with Christ, participation in Christ, and partaking of Christ are “deeply woven into the fabric of his soteriology.”<sup>4</sup>

While a thorough examination of Calvin’s doctrine of union with Christ in soteriology is not possible here, three defining characteristics of his theology stand out. First, Calvin’s understanding of the Spirit’s work in in the life of the believer must be understood within his larger historical framework or meta-narrative of salvation, that is “union with Christ.” Calvin would likely not approve of the common creation-fall-redemption meta-narrative for redemptive history. For Calvin, union with God is not only the defining motif of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, it is the unifying meta-narrative of history. For Calvin, man was created in union with God and had his Spiritual life in that union. The fall caused separation from God and this “estrangement was the death of his soul.”<sup>5</sup> In their union with Christ, believers become participants in all of the benefits Christ’s redemption and even of Christ himself.<sup>6</sup> In their death and resurrection, this re-union is completed. So, for Calvin, “day by day, he [Christ] grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us.”<sup>7</sup> The meta-narrative of history for Calvin, then, is something like: union, separation, incarnation, union, and re-union.

Secondly, set within this meta-narrative, Calvin identifies the Holy Spirit as the prime agent effecting our union. At the beginning of Book Three of the Institutes, after having set out the knowledge of God (Book One) and the redemption purchased through the work of Christ (Book Two), Calvin sets out to explain “the way in which we receive the grace of Christ (Book Three).” For Calvin the redemption purchased by Christ and its

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<sup>4</sup> Billings, *Union with Christ*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Calvin, and John T McNeill, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics (London: S.C.M. Press., 1961), 246.

<sup>6</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 570.

<sup>7</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 570.

application are entirely separate works, a point not every theological system concedes. So, for him the question is: how do we receive the benefits that the Father bestowed on believers in Christ since as long as “we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race is useless and of no value to us.”<sup>8</sup> His answer is simple: “the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Jesus Christ effectually unites us to himself.”<sup>9</sup> His logic is important: believers lost their union with God in the fall, Christ restored the possibility of re-union, but it is of no use to anyone unless it is effectively joined with the believer. Since there is no benefit outside of Christ and since the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ, the one defining work the Holy Spirit effects (although there are many different aspects to this) is unite us to Christ.

Third, this union with Christ is not, in Calvin’s mind, to be confused with Eastern *theosis* or the deification error. To those not familiar with “union with Christ” as a unifying theological theme, it may be tempting to see Calvin’s emphasis as being a western restatement of Eastern deification theology. Billings and Mosser, however, are right to point out that Calvin always maintains the creator/creature distinction, and his doctrine of union is significantly different that Eastern *theosis* theology.<sup>10</sup>

### **Holy Spirit and Union with Christ in the Westminster Standards**

Westminster, whether intentionally or not, follows Calvin in seeing union with Christ as the unifying motif for the Spirit’s work, however, also like Calvin, this is because the benefits of Christ need to be applied through union, and the Spirit is the agent of that union. The logic of Westminster can most clearly be seen in the Larger

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<sup>8</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 537.

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 538.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55, no. 1 (2002): 36-57; J. Todd Billings, “United to God through Christ: Calvin on the Question of Deification,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 98, no. 3 (July 2005): 315-34.

Catechism, so I will use it to illustrate the theme of union in redemption and the role of the Spirit in union.

Westminster establishes (1) that the redemption secured by Christ must be “applied” and (2) that this application is the special work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> The categorical distinctions of “redemption accomplished” and “redemption applied” used by Calvin and repeated by Westminster seem to be a defining characteristic of Reformed soteriology maintained by later theologians in the Reformed tradition.<sup>12</sup> The Shorter Catechism notes that this application is “effectual,” while the Confession reserves the “effectual” language only for calling. The catechisms, therefore, specifically state the much broader effective application of Christ and all his benefits to believers through the Holy Spirit. These benefits are then divided into two larger categories: benefits of union and benefits of communion (or initial union and deepening union).<sup>13</sup>

### *Union with Christ*

Union with Christ is the believers “joining to Christ,” and this union is spiritual and mystical, yet real and inseparable.<sup>14</sup> It is accomplished through God’s effectual calling in which, according to Westminster, God invites, draws, savingly enlightens, renews, and determines their wills, by His word and Spirit, so that Christ’s grace is offered and conferred. Note that for Westminster, effectual calling is the *work* and union is the *result*, and all three sections of the standards specifically note that the

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<sup>11</sup> Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Presbyterian Church in America, 2007), 197.

<sup>12</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1955).

<sup>13</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 202.

<sup>14</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 203.



effectual calling is the work of the Spirit.<sup>15</sup> So, for Westminster, the Spirit unites believers to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit's effectual call.

### *Communion in Christ*

The second division of Christ's benefits, that is, communion benefits, is further subdivided into communion in grace and communion in glory. Communion in grace is the believers partaking of the virtue of Christ's mediation in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and other derivative graces.<sup>16</sup> There is no specific mention of the work of the Spirit in bringing about this communion in grace in the corresponding questions on the graces (69-81), however it is clear that Westminster views communion in these graces of Christ as being the work of the Holy Spirit. This is made clear earlier in question 58, "We are made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath procured, by the application of them to us, which is the work especially of the Holy Spirit," and later in answer to the question what are those benefits, Westminster answers, "union and communion in grace and glory."<sup>17</sup> So, Westminster views all that follows in its discussion on union and communion as being a "special work of the Holy Spirit." This is an important, but perhaps overlooked, point because of the structure and detail of the catechetical format. Westminster places the heading of "union and communion with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit" in question 65 over all of its discussion on the entire *ordo salutis* (66-90).

Communion in Christ's glory: This "union and communion with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit" heading includes, then, the last section of its discussion, communion in Christ's glory.<sup>18</sup> Using the logic above, then, that the all of the

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<sup>15</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 45, 203, 374.

<sup>16</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 202.

<sup>18</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 221.

work of union and communion is the special work of the Holy Spirit, Westminster includes the following elements as the direct ministry of the Spirit:

1. Communion in glory in this life – a sense of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, the hope of glory, conviction of sin, and threat of punishment for disobedience.<sup>19</sup>
2. Communion in glory at after death – deliverance from the sting and curse of death, death becomes a freeing from sin and misery, death becomes the means by which believers are made more capable of enjoying fuller and deeper union with Christ in glory.<sup>20</sup>
3. Communion in glory after death – believers’ souls are made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, they behold the face of God in light and glory, their bodies rest in grave in continuing union with Christ.<sup>21</sup>
4. Communion in glory at the resurrection/day of judgement – believers bodies will be raised and united to their souls, their bodies made like Christ’s body, shall be set at the right hand of Christ’s, be openly acknowledged and acquitted, join with Christ in judging angels and men, received into heaven, be fully freed from sin and misery, filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly happy both in body and soul, dwell in the immediate company of saints and holy angels, behold the immediate vision of Father, Son and Holy Spirit for eternity.<sup>22</sup>

I have taken the space to fully list the “communion in Christ’s glory” in view by Westminster to highlight the vast scope of blessings that, in their view, are under the “special work of the Holy Spirit.” For Westminster, then, the entire work of redemptive application is the “special work of the Holy Spirit” uniting believers to Christ.

This union happens in two grand stages: initial (union) and progressive (communion). The progressive communion deepens and furthers union with Christ until completion. This entire section of the Larger Catechism (58-90) ends with the definition of glorification as the culmination of the work of the Holy Spirit: “this is the perfect and

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<sup>19</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 221.

<sup>20</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 222.

<sup>21</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 223.

<sup>22</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 227.

full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory.”<sup>23</sup> For Westminster, then, union with Christ, initially and then progressively to completion, is the unifying motif of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

While Hodge follows Calving and Westminster, he advances their view in one significant way. Hodge not only specifies *that* the primary work of the Spirit is to unite believers to Christ, he specifies *how* the Spirit does so. Hodge says that the primary way that the Spirit effect union is through what he calls “vocation,” or the speaking/calling work of the Holy Spirit. Hodge views the many biblical references to the “calling of God” and the “called of God,” though these do not always specifically mention the Spirit, as being specific references to the work of the Holy Spirit. He says: “It is by a divine call, that sinners are made partakers of the benefits of redemption. And the influence of the Holy Spirit by which they are transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, is a vocation, or effectual calling.” Although Westminster does say that effectual calling is the work of the Holy Spirit, Hodge goes further to describe the entire role of the Holy Spirit in this way: He *calls* them into union and communion with Christ.

Hodge further grounds this principle in God’s relation to the world and the power of the divine word. God speaks and it is done. Hodge infers from this that the way God effects His will generally is through the power of the divine word which, when spoken, creates reality. His conclusion: “As in the external world He created all things by the word of His power; so all effects in the moral or Spiritual world are accomplished by a volition or command....(because) to call...is to effect, to cause to be, or to occur.”<sup>24</sup> So, while Hodge agrees with Calvin and Westminster that the union with Christ is the unifying motif of the work of the holy Spirit in the life of believers, he adds richness to

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<sup>23</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 228.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 641.

the doctrine by elaborating on *how* the Spirit does so: the Spirit unites believers to Christ through speaking the divine word which effect that which is spoken.

This connection between word and Spirit correlates with the role of the Holy Spirit and the word of God in general: while the divine word originates in the Father, and is communicated through the Son, it terminates in the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> This understanding also adds further clarity to John 16:14-15: “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” Jesus is teaching here that the work of the Spirit is not simply to speak “all that is in Christ” to the church, but to speak it effectually, to cause it to be, to cause it to occur in their lives. All that the Father has belongs to Jesus – and all that that belongs to Jesus will be effectually spoken by the Spirit into the lives of believers so that the believer who obediently listens to the words of the Holy Spirit will be united to Christ.

In summary, Hodge goes to great length to distinguish between union and communion with Christ. Although there are similarities (both are affected by the holy spirit and both are in essence effecting a union with Christ in some way) they are distinct. Sanctification is the deepening of the union already begun in conversion.

### **Sanctification Is Not Intermittent Episodes of Excitement**

Secondly, the nature of the Christian life not a series of “excitements” followed by periods of dullness and insensitivity. Hodge recognizes that people can be moved emotionally to the things of God, perhaps in a worship service or experience, and then fall back into apathy. This, he says, is not real spiritual life. Here, again, Hodge is concerned with authenticity in the Christian life and he seems eager to make sure that the

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<sup>25</sup> Allison, Gregg R, and Köstenberger Andreas J., *The Holy Spirit: Theology for the People of God*. (Nashville: B&H Academic 2020), 307.

Christianity is seen as a “personal relationship” with God or a “knowledge of God. “To know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life. Such knowledge is the life of the soul.”<sup>26</sup>

This emphasis on knowing God is reminiscent of Calvin’s opening salvo that true knowledge of God leads to true knowledge of self, and that true knowledge of self leads to true knowledge of God.<sup>27</sup> It must be said, here, that for both Hodge and Calvin the word true should be read “authentic.” Their concern was not true doctrine or even a correct theology about salvation. The concern for both was to get to the heart of authentic religion. Both were operating in a climate of widespread religious activity and knowledge; the question for both was “what is the nature of authentic and true religious relationship with God.”

Although this is not a specific theme treated by the standards, that does not mean they were not concerned with articulating the nature of true faith versus a false faith. In numerous places, true faith is contrasted with false. For example, in Chapter 10:4, while explaining effectual calling, the Confession stresses:

“Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Sanctification Is Not External**

### **The Internal Life**

Hodge also introduces as theme that will dominate his larger treatise on sanctification, namely that the Christian life is an internal work and not an external

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<sup>26</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 634.

<sup>28</sup> Westminster, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, 227.

work. It is here, specifically on this point, that Hodge dives into the mysterious nature of spiritual life. The essence of life is mysterious, no one knows what it really is. “No man can tell what life is. He sees its different forms in vegetables, in animals, and in the rational soul; but he cannot detect the secret spring of these different kinds of activity.”<sup>29</sup> Life produces evidence of life, but the evidences of life should not be confused with the essence of life itself. In the same way, spiritual life produces evidences of life that are external (perceptions, purposes, actions, etc.) but these are not to be confused with life itself which is internal. This internal life is resident in the heart.<sup>30</sup>

### **What Is the Heart?**

Western Christians typically associate the heart with the emotional center of our being, viewing it as the place from which we love, hurt, dream, etc. But in the New Testament, it is not the heart that is the seat of our emotions, it is the bowels or intestines.<sup>31</sup>

The heart, in the minds of Jewish writers and teachers, may be inclusive of emotions, but is not limited to the emotions. Eklund’s characterization of the heart as a person’s inner self<sup>32</sup> and Allison’s summary of Jewish thinking on the heart as feeling, thinking, willing<sup>33</sup> are accurate but limited. With over 900 references to the heart in scripture, space does not allow for a full treatment on the theology of the heart. Nevertheless, some deeper understanding is necessary to fully grasp the meaning of the heart in scripture, and a survey of these passages reveal at least five critical teachings.

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<sup>29</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 236.

<sup>30</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 238.

<sup>31</sup> Eklund, Rebekah Ann, *The Beatitudes through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 197.

<sup>32</sup> Eklund, *The Beatitudes through the Ages*, 197.

<sup>33</sup> Allison, Dale C., *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1999), 51.

First, the heart is the source from which life is lived. For example, in Mark 7:21-22,<sup>34</sup> Jesus taught “For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.” It is important to note here that the heart is not simply capable of thoughts, feelings, and intuitions, it is the source from which all thought, action, and words proceed and is therefore better understood as the primary place from which life is lived.

Second, and connected to the first, the heart is the place of decision and change. Because the heart is the source from which life is lived, the heart is also the place where decisions must be made and where change must occur. Therefore, when God regenerates and effectually calls His people to Himself, He does so by removing their heart of stone and giving them a “new heart” of flesh so that their lives can be changed and they may be enabled to follow His decrees and laws (Ezek 36:26).

Third, the heart is the place of encounter with God. When Jesus characterized the Pharisees waywardness and independence from God, He quoted Isaiah in saying their “hearts are far from me” (Matt 15:8). Likewise, in Ezekiel God admonishes His people for their betrayal when they “took their idols into their hearts (Ezek 14:1-5). The heart, then is where loyalty, intimacy, and fidelity to God is enacted, where God is met, loved, and worshipped.

Fourth, and what may seem like paradoxically, the heart is beyond the reach of man and fully accessible only to God. Even though the heart is the center of man’s being and of primary importance, because of sin the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. The prophet then laments, “who can understand it?” The only hope is in the LORD who searches the heart (Jer 17:9-10). Likewise, it is in desperation that David prays to the LORD to search his mind and try his heart (Ps 139:23). The heart, then, is the place

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<sup>34</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

where something or someone must intervene, and place of such power that another with greater power must act.

Fifth, and most significantly for the purposes of this paper, the heart is the place where the gospel penetrates because the heart is the place where the light of the gospel and the knowledge of the glory of God are “seen.” (2 Cor 4:6). The heart is the place where light is perceived, therefore the Bible speaks of the “eyes of the heart” being enlightened (Eph 1:18). More specifically, the light brings the image of the face of Christ and a vision of God Himself. The heart, then, the place where we see God’s face in Jesus Christ.

In summary, we may say that: “The heart is the dwelling place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place ‘to which I withdraw.’ The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as images of God we live in relation; it is the place of covenant.”<sup>35</sup>

When the heart is acknowledged for all its complex beauty, especially as the place of encounter with God, Hodge’s view of sanctification as a primarily interior work with external consequences makes sense. Hodge is not saying that sanctification does not have external impact; rather, the ongoing uniting of a person to God happens primarily in the heart and since the heart is the source of thoughts words and actions it has necessary external impact and consequence.

This understanding of the heart is critical to understand Hodge’s view of sanctification. As will be seen later, Hodge clearly maintains that sanctification has an outward consequence. One cannot be a Christian without living a wholly life. But for

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<sup>35</sup> Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 614.



Hodge, the holy life is not the essence of sanctification; it is an effect. The cause of this effect is the union of the soul to God; “a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God.”<sup>36</sup> It is only because the soul is united to God in deep, abiding, and restorative ways that the Christian life is manifested.

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<sup>36</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

CHAPTER 3  
PRELIMINARIES OR ACCOMPANYING GRACES OF  
SANCTIFICATION

Having treated what Hodge believe sanctification is not, I now turn to an examination of what sanctification is. Hodge's writing on this is significant, but it would be a mistake to read all of that material as having the same import. I believe that when it comes to the nature of sanctification itself, it is best to make a distinction between those elements of sanctification which were essential to sanctification and those which merely accompanied sanctification. This distinction is critical to understanding Hodge. To use his words, it is necessary to distinguish between those "attributes . . . essential to its genuineness, but do not constitute its character."<sup>1</sup> In other words, for Hodge there were clearly some graces or characteristics of salvation that accompanied the work itself. These should not be confused with the essential nature or character of salvation.

One useful tool used by some in the church to sift this material into useful instruction for the church today is to distinguish between the *esse*, the *benne esse* and the *plene esse*. *Esse* indicates that which is of the essence of the very existence of the thing itself. *Bene esse* indicates that which is of benefit for the life of the church. *Plene esse* indicates that which is of the fullness of the church's life. For any given issue in the life and practice of the church, many have found it useful to distinguish which matters are of the *esse* (the essence) of the issue for the church and which are non-essential but still good for the *bene esse* (the well-being) of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 208.

The position of this paper is that Hodge was operating with the categories of *esse* (essence) and *benne esse* (well-being) in his understanding of sanctification, even though he did not use those words. In other words, even though he did not specifically use the terms *esse*, *bene esse*, and *plene esse*, it is clear in his instructions that he made a distinction between those matters which were essential to the genuineness of sanctification and which were useful instructions for the good of the church but not essential to defining the doctrine itself. Therefore, before examining the elements essential to the nature of sanctification (*esse*), I will examine those elements descriptive of its authenticity (*bene esse* or *plene esse*), or rather the surrounding elements of sanctification. Hodge identifies seven accompanying attributes “essential to its genuineness” but not to its character.

### **The Subject of the Whole Man**

The first ingredient to understand on Hodge’s view of sanctification is the subject or object, rather, of sanctification. In other words, what is being sanctified. Hodge stresses that the object of sanctification is the whole man. Hodge is clearly opposed to trichotomy in his *Systematic Theology* noting that “...the scriptural doctrine is opposed to Trichotomy.”<sup>2</sup> In his “Way of Life” however, he is not so adamant and or clear. He states that the “the mind becomes more and more enlightened, the will more submissive to the rule of right, and affections more thoroughly purified” and he quotes the primary proof text for trichotomy (1 Thess 4:13).<sup>3</sup> In his explanation, however, he is clear to emphasize that the body and the soul together are the objects of the sanctifying work. Because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and members of the body of Christ by virtue of which their union necessitates sanctification. The body,

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 47. For a complete treatment of Hodge’s view on trichotomy, see his systematics, Volume 2, pp. 47-51.

<sup>3</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 236.

inseparably connected to the soul, brings the soul into submission. Hodge's main point here is not the methodology, but the object of sanctification; and for him it is the whole man, body and soul.

In this Hodge is following both Calvin and Westminster. The Shorter Catechism succinctly states: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."<sup>4</sup>

### **Holiness**

Second, Hodge says that holiness or goodness is the most fundamental of all the ways in which this renewal demonstrated. For Hodge, all the others graces and fruit of the Christian life (such as love, faith, meekness, kindness, etc.) are all outgrowths of the one great fundamental grace of holiness.<sup>5</sup> "Reverence, love, submission, justice, benevolence, are but different exercises of one and the same principal holiness."<sup>6</sup> This for Hodge is the definition of moral excellence. It is not necessary, for him, to delineate all the manifold ways that holiness manifests itself in the life of the believer. Rather, for him, holiness is the one great work of sanctification upon the whole man.

This is not to say, however, that holiness is the essence of sanctification, and to read Hodge this way would be a misunderstanding. For example, while Gutjahr rightly describes Hodges theological methodology as a "strict Scottish Common Sense philosophical line" of theological reasoning,<sup>7</sup> over simplifies Hodges piety when he says

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<sup>4</sup> Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Presbyterian Church in America, 2007), , 221.

<sup>5</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 210.

<sup>6</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 211.

<sup>7</sup> Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 203.

it is a strict emphasis on holiness.<sup>8</sup> This is precisely where “stodgy Hodge” is misunderstood and underappreciated. It would be logical to conclude that a theologian of his era and stature would advocate a piety that is less personal and experiential. The opposite is true of Hodge. While he certainly insists that holiness is a necessary characteristic of authentic sanctification and “true religion,” it does not constitute its essence.

Noll rightly observes that Hodge say the Christian life as “adherence to a doctrine and a lived experience.”<sup>9</sup> For Hodge, these two realities were not incompatible. Even though later observers, like Noll, observe a tension between these two realities, no reasoning is given to the justification for seeing a tension. It is more appropriate to see this tension as a unique aspect of Hodge’s theology rather than an inconsistency that needs to be explained. There is another interpretation to Hodge that, in my mind, also fails short.<sup>10</sup>

Again, Hodge is following Westminster. In Chapter 13 of the confession, Westminster defines sanctification, in part, as those in Christ “more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Notable here, is that “all saving graces” are synonymous with and the result of the “practice of true holiness.” Holiness, then, is not one of many graces and fruit of sanctification, it is the taproot from which all other graces emerge.

### **Love of God**

Third, Hodge says that the greatest of the graces, however, is love. Love, for Hodge, is the primary and most significant outgrowth or consequence to the holiness

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<sup>8</sup> Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy*, 204-205.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart, John W, and James H Moorhead, *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2002), 191.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart and Moorhead, *Charles Hodge Revisited : A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*, 192.

wrought by sanctification. It is, for him, the “most comprehensive and important of all the manifestations of this inward spiritual life.”<sup>11</sup> Love is not mere affection; it is the resting in “his excellence as the supreme object of complacency and desire.” It is much more akin to the idea of singleness of heart or purity of heart. It is the love of a “personal being” and a longing to be in his presence. In fact, Hodges points to the worship of those in the presence of God as examples of those who are perfectly manifesting what we participate imperfectly here in this world.

### **Beatific Vision in Charles Hodge**

While the beatific vision received considerable attention and discussion in the early church, medieval, and reformed literature, it has received little attention in modern Reformed literature. This may be due to a suspicion of all things that appear, at first glance to be Roman Catholic (as all medieval emphasis may appear) or to a more scientific and rationalistic impulse descending from the enlightenment. Whatever the reason, this diminished treatment of the doctrine is out of line with older reformed thought. We can see this in a brief review of this doctrine in Charles Hodge.

Hodge addresses the beatific vision in the final pages of his *Systematic Theology* under his treatment of heaven and the final consummation of all things.

We know however: (1.) That this incomprehensible blessedness of heaven shall arise from the vision of God. This vision is beatific. It beatifies. It transforms the soul into the divine image; transfusing into it the divine life, so that it is filled with the fullness of God. This vision of God is in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the plenitude of the divine glory bodily. God is seen in fashion as a man; and it is this manifestation of God in the person of Christ that is inconceivably and intolerably ravishing. Peter, James, and John became as dead men when they saw his glory, for a moment, in the holy mount. (2.) The blessedness of the redeemed will flow not only from the manifestation of the glory, but also of the love of God; of that love, mysterious, unchangeable, and infinite, of which the work of redemption is the fruit.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 860-861.

Read in isolation, this passage is unremarkable. Hodge simply states that believers will see God in all His glory in their final glorified state in heaven. Read in the context of his larger understanding of the spiritual life, however, it is not that simple. For instance, in his treatment of the “evangelical mystics,” Hodge says admirably, “It was not that they held that the beatific vision of God, the intuition of his glory, which belongs to heaven, is attainable in this world and attainable by abstraction, ecstatic apprehension, or passive reception, but that the soul becomes one with God, if not in substance, yet in life. These men, however, were great blessings to the church.”<sup>13</sup> In his treatment of the Christian life, he follows the mystics by summarizing true religion as “a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God.”<sup>14</sup>

Hodge describes the vision as the “intuition of his glory,”<sup>15</sup> and notes that in the Christian life the apprehension of this glory may increase to the point that “heaven has been opened to the view of men, its inhabitants have been seen with their faces veiled, and bowing before the throne of God....The exercise of these feelings of reverence and love (maybe) more prolonged, when the soul withdraws from the world, and sets itself in the presence of God.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Acquiescence to His Will**

Fourth, longing for God and a desire for him with singleness of heart will lead, naturally, to a submission to his will. It is when the renewed soul is “filled with the assurance of the wisdom, power and goodness of God.” In other words, when the renewed soul is satisfied deeply with God and is dwelling more perfectly in the presence of His being, it will naturally, then, resign itself to the will of God. Love necessarily

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<sup>13</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 79.

<sup>14</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 208.

<sup>15</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 212.

produces obedience because it presupposes a conformity of the soul to God in the perception of what is true and right.<sup>17</sup> In other words, loving God is the love of all that is pure and good and right – it must, therefore, result in the conformity to all that is pure and good and right.

Here Hodge takes some time to expand on the necessity of holiness as a result of a relationship with God. It is a non sequitur to maintain that the soul that loves God could not also become like God, if not perfectly and immediately, certainly and progressively. “Wherever there is reconciliation to God, or the restoration of the divine image, there must be conformity of heart and life to the will of God.”<sup>18</sup> Obedience is but love in action. By this Hodge does not mean that obedience is the evidence of love but the expression; obedience is love made visible.

### **Peace and Joy**

Fifth, sanctification is not the mere conformity of the soul to God in holiness as if that were something not desirable. It is both right and good. It is not simply the right things to do, it results in the positive, existential benefits of peace and joy for those that are being sanctified. “Excellence and enjoyment are blended in inseparable union; so that all right emotions and affections are pleasurable.”<sup>19</sup> This point may be the most contemporarily relevant point to all of Hodge’s treatment of sanctification. For Hodge, we cannot be whole apart from God. We become whole men and women as we find God and we find God in Jesus Christ. Loving God, then, is not simply the right thing to do, it is the most selfish and hedonist thing we could do because it is the only way that our soul will be truly satisfied. The conformity of the soul to God in holiness is simply the conformity of the soul to that which it was made for from the creation of the world.

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<sup>17</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 213.

<sup>19</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 214.



Hence, he says, “the scriptures ascribe to communion with God a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and a peace which passes all understanding.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Benevolent and Just Toward Others**

Sixth For Hodge, it is impossible to be truly sanctified without also feeling and acting correctly toward their fellow man.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, just as Hodge says that the pursuit of God is in essence a selfish act because it seeks our own good; he says that our love for others should likewise be, simply, for their own good. In other words, just as reconciliation to God is the best thing we can do for ourselves, loving others is motivated out of a desire for others to prosper and flourish as well. Therefore, “A new man means a good man, one who is like God Holy, just, benevolent, and merciful.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Self-Denial**

Seventh, in what might seem like a contradiction to the foregoing hedonist pursuit of God, Hodge says that sanctification does include an element of self-denial. However, to understand Hodge correctly we must note that it is only the sinful desires of the flesh that must be denied. For Hodge, the sinful nature still remains in the old man; the only part of us that must be denied, then, is the part of us that is not in conformity to God. God can not look upon, much less bless, that which he did not make. And for Hodge, the part of us that is still sinful is not created by God; it must, therefore, die so that we can be wholly and completely united to God in the conformity of our soul to him.

In summary, Hodge, in his description of sanctification, distinguishes between the essence of sanctification and the effects of sanctification. In the former (taken up in the next section) are the necessary elements apart from which sanctification cannot exist

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<sup>20</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 214.

<sup>21</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 214.

<sup>22</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 215.

and define its essential character. The latter, though not negotiable, do not make up the essence of sanctification itself and should not be confused with it but are necessary to its authenticity and genuineness.

True Christians are sanctified. That is, they are renewed in the whole man after the image of God so as to be holy. This is the foundation and taproot of all other saving graces in the Christian life. From this holiness come all other graces: love of God, desire for the presence of God and a resting in his presence, submission to his will, joy and peace in their conformity to God, devout, fellowship with God and communion with Jesus Christ; obedient, dying to self where necessary; honest and benevolent toward other people. These graces, however, are the effects of sanctification. They can no more be achieved directly that fruit can be obtained apart from the tree that bear it. The next section, then, is the heart of Hodges understanding of sanctification and where he is most useful to our understanding today.

CHAPTER 4  
ESSENTIALS OF SANCTIFICATION

**A New Life**

Having examined what sanctification is not and what accompanies sanctification, I now turn to examine the essential nature and characteristics of sanctification in Hodge's theology. The first of these essential elements is new life. It should be noted that Hodge often turns to nature and creation for proof of the spiritual and invisible world. Spiritual life is like biological life: birth unto life is different than the life lived; spiritual life, like biological life, is consistent and not intermittent; spiritual life, like biological life, is distinguishable from the effects of life. Hodge locates the source of the changed life in the regenerated heart or new life source created within a person.<sup>1</sup>

In saying this Hodge is making clear to his readers that the new life of a believer is not merely moral restraint or a change in external behavior. He seems to be intent on making clear that it is something more fundamental. And while this new life results in a change in external behavior, Hodge states clearly that the essence of this new life is a "participation of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), or the conformity of the soul to God." He equates this conformity with intimate "knowledge" of God which is the "life of the soul."<sup>2</sup> It is here that Hodge is most specific: the new life of the believer is the intimate knowledge of God in the soul of man. This is the conformity of the soul to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 204.

It should be noted at this point that Hodge holds to a dichotomist conception of man, that is, that man is made up of two distinct parts, a body and a soul.<sup>3</sup> The soul, in Hodge's mind, is a substance distinct from the body and this soul is the sum of all the immaterial parts of man – the mind, emotions, emotions, consciousness, heart, etc.<sup>4</sup> It is clear to Hodge that the life of man is seated in the soul as well. Since the body without the soul is dead and returns to dust, it is clear that the soul is the life of a person. This is why when God breathes life into man it is said that man became a “living soul.”<sup>5</sup>

It is on this point that Hodge begins to fully distinguish his view of sanctification not only from some of his contemporaries but also from some current Presbyterian theologies. Christianity is both a doctrine and a life. But it is not even some aspect of new life and experience that is exotic and random – it is nothing less than the life of Christ being formed in the new person. It is not just any new life in the Christian – it is Christ's life in the person.

Writing in response to Schleiermacher whom he thought misunderstood what Christianity is both from an objective and subjective point of view, Hodge says that Christianity is the life of Christ formed in the soul:

Christianity is both a doctrine and a life, and...the object of true faith is both a proposition and a person...Christianity objectively considered, is the testimony of God concerning his son, it is the whole revelation of truth contained in the scriptures, concerning the redemption of man through Jesus Christ our Lord. Subjectively considered, it is the life of Christ in the soul, or, that form of spiritual life which has its origin in Christ, is determined by the revelation concerning his person and work, which is due to the indwelling of his spirit.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Hoffecker, W. Andrew, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 63.

Noll mistakenly tends to equate the inward life with subjective feelings.<sup>7</sup> Hodge, as will be seen clearly sees sanctification as, primarily, an inward work of the Spirit uniting the soul to God. But Hodge would also say the sensing of that work is not be confused with the work itself. Noll is emblematic of much of current evangelicalism that would confuse the two. For Hodge, knowing God and sensing God are different; being conformed to Christ and sensing that conformity are different; knowing God's presence and feeling God's presence are different. And although Hodge would certainly allow for feelings and sentiment in the Christian life, he never confuses that with the essence of the Christian life.

### **Regeneration**

The first work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is regeneration, that is, the new birth effected by the Holy Spirit resulting in a new creation for those born from above (2 Cor 5:17; John 3:3). This new birth is the work of the Spirit which both removes the old heart and puts in a new heart (Ezek 36:26-27) and is absolutely necessary to salvation, that is, “you *must* be born again by the Spirit” (John 3:5-8). Although the phrase “new birth” is not directly associated with union with Christ, the reality of a new birth/new life is. The Apostle Paul notes that we were “made alive” in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:5) and that all those who are in Christ are indeed a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). Within this first element of regeneration, we can see three “sub-aspects” of regeneration significant enough in their own right to bear individual mention: conviction of sin, enlightening of the mind, and renewal of the will.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hofferker, W. Andrew. *Piety and the Princeton Theologians Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield*, 68-69

<sup>8</sup> Here I am following the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* definition of effectual calling in question 31. The Westminster Standards do not list regeneration as a separate element of the *ordo salutis*. Instead, under the definition of effectual calling, the standards highlight three aspects: conviction of sin, enlightening the mind, and renewal of the will.

## **Conviction of Sin**

In regard to conviction of sin, the scriptures are clear that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:8-11 Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteous, and judgement. It is important to note that the work of the Spirit in this way is bringing about an awareness that was not present prior to the work of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul notes that the natural (unregenerate) man does not understand the things of God. They are foolish to him because he does not have the Holy Spirit, and these “Spiritual” things are Spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:6-16). This understanding would not be present apart from the work of the Holy Spirit because they are otherwise secret and hidden (2 Cor 2:7).

It is difficult to do a direct comparison of this work of the Holy Spirit to union with Christ because this phrase “convict the world of sin” is only used in John 16. However, union with Christ is closely associated with an awareness of sin in the scriptures. For example, in 1 John, in an extended passage on what union with Christ looks like (1:5-2:6), John says that denying sin is a sign that we are in denial, do not have the truth in us, making God a liar, and us devoid of his word (1:8-10). On the contrary, those that keep his word and walk in the same way he walked are “in him” (2:5-6). We can conclude, then, that the life in denial of sin is a life *outside* of Christ; whereas a life that confesses sin and repents is a life *in* Christ. There is also the association of Spiritual understanding with union with Christ in 1 Corinthians 2:16. While absence of the Holy Spirit is associated with unawareness of the things of God, those with the Holy Spirit understand the things of God because they “have the mind of Christ.” Likewise, in Ephesians 1:17-18, Paul says that the Spirit is one of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge (intimate union and communion with another) of him (Jesus). Therefore, while the scriptures do not explicitly connect conviction of sin with union with Christ, they do connect the two doctrines by logic and by close association.

## **Enlightening Our Minds**

As a part of its regenerative work, the holy Spirit also enlightens our minds to understand the things of God. Paul states that Spirit has been given specifically so that we may understand the things of God that would not be known apart from this regenerative, enlightening work (1 Cor 2:12). Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of wisdom (Eph 1:17-18), the Spirit of truth who will lead us into all truth (John 16:13), and the one who will teach us all things (John 14:26).

Spiritual understanding is also associated with union with Christ. Jesus is our wisdom (1 Cor 1:30) so we are therefore wise in Christ (1 Cor 4:10). Just as the secret things of God are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, we have received the mystery of His will which he set forth to us in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:9). Elsewhere, Paul describes this enlightening as receiving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

## **Renewing our Wills**

In His regenerative work, the Holy Spirit renews the will, that is, the capacity to choose. Closely related to repentance (the actual turning away from sin and death to God), the renewal of the will is the restoration of the capacity to make such a choice. Prior to this regenerative work, we were dead (Eph 2:4-5), but after this regenerative work we are able to turn from darkness (Acts 26:18).

Likewise, a renewed will and renunciation of sin is related to our union with Christ (Rom 6:10-11). In Romans 6:1-11, Paul argues that it is precisely because we have been united to Christ by baptism into his death that we can no longer continue in sin (Rom 6:4) and concludes that we must “must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11).

In summary, the work of regeneration is the unique work of the Holy Spirit who alone is able to create new life (John 6:3). Specifically, he does so by convicting us of sin, enlightening our minds, and renewing our wills. While regeneration is not directly

and specifically connected to union with Christ, it can be associated with union with Christ either by direct scriptural support (enlightening our minds), by logical connection to like works (conviction of sin), or simply generally (renewal of our wills). Therefore, if regeneration is a ministry of the Holy Spirit and the regenerated life is characteristic of union with Christ, we may rightly conclude that the Holy Spirit brings about regeneration in the believer's life by effectively uniting them to Christ.

### **Knowledge of a Personal Being**

Second, Hodge goes on to note that sanctification is the knowledge is of a personal being who, he says, “stands in most intimate relations to ourselves.”<sup>9</sup> Here Hodge comes very close to using the language of the mystics who spoke of coming into the presence of God and practicing His presence. As evidence, Hodge points to the several times in scripture when we are given a glimpse into heaven; on these occasions, he says, what we see is creatures (humans and angels) bowing in love and awe before the presence of God. This, he says, is the true picture of our relationship to God even in this life.

This “practice of the presence” can come in two distinct ways for the believer. The first is a casual awareness of the presence of God throughout the day as we recognize his continual presence with us. The second is a more prolonged practicing of his presence when “the soul withdraws from the world, and sets itself in the presence of God.”<sup>10</sup>

In both cases the result is the same: it is a “walking with God...(in which we) feel him to be near and rejoice in his presence.”<sup>11</sup> Hodge, then, makes this experience of communion with God the center and hallmark of what he calls “true religion.” The

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<sup>9</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 244.

<sup>10</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 245.

<sup>11</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 245.



essence of the Christian life is the restoration of communion with God; this happens in the soul. He states it no more clearly than when he says: “There is no religion without this intercourse (intimate knowledge) of the soul with God...the soul perishes when not in communion with God.”<sup>12</sup>

Hodge details the various fruits or results of a soul in communion with God: obedience, joy, love of others, self-denial, etc. But he stresses that these are not the essence of life, merely that signs of life. The essence, for him, is found in the soul’s communion with its maker, preserver, ruler, father who “watches over us, protects us supplies all our wants, holds communion with us, manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world.”<sup>13</sup> It is this manifestation of the presence of God in a personal way to each soul that is the source of new life for the believer.

### **Supernatural Character**

Third, Hodge goes to great lengths to emphasize the supernatural character of this new life both in its origin and its ongoing work. He makes a clear distinction between the providential work of God through what he calls “fixed laws” and the “agency of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> The Bible, he says, makes a distinction between the providence of God and operations of his grace – and the work of sanctification is clearly under the operations of his grace. And although God may use second causes to bring about his supernatural work, this does not change the fact that new life is an interruption in the “natural” order to change the course of a human being’s life.

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<sup>12</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 245.

<sup>13</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 244.

<sup>14</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 214.

## The Spirit as Author

Fourth, Hodge stresses that sanctification is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Hodge notes several “proofs” of the supernatural character of the new life. The first of these is the fact that the bible consistently refers to God as the author of the new life (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20-21). This new life is created in the believer specifically through the work of the holy Spirit of whom we are born, enlightened, taught, led, cleansed, live, walk, and rejoice. The Spirit indwells the believer and is the “abiding source of all the actings of that spiritual life which He implants in the soul.”<sup>15</sup> “It is because men cannot cleanse or heal themselves, that they are declared to be cleansed and healed by God....And it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us.”<sup>16</sup> For Hodge, the restoration of the soul back to communion with God is the work of the Spirit.

The second proof of the supernatural character of the new life is the fact that we are instructed to pray for the graces of repentance, faith, and other graces.<sup>17</sup> By this Hodge means that the work of sanctification is not automatic as a result of regeneration. This is why the apostle Paul prays that his readers may know what is the “exceeding greatness of his power (Eph 1:19).” And while Hodge will later speak to the collaboration believers have in this work of sanctification, he simply notes that it is impossible apart from the supernatural work of God as proven by the fact that we must pray for God’s participation in our life.

The third proof of the supernatural character of the new life is the believer’s vital union with Christ. Hodge points to the fact that without me, said Jesus, believers can do nothing. It is this union with Christ that is vital to any fruit bearing in the life of

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<sup>15</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 216.

<sup>16</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 216.

<sup>17</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 217.

the believer just as the branch must abide in the vine. The vital union with Christ as a necessity is proof, then, that the work of new life is supernatural.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth and final evidence of the supernatural character of the new life is what Hodge calls “related doctrines.” In other words, when set within the context of theology in general, it only makes sense that the new life is a supernatural work. The fact that our entire salvation is a work of grace,<sup>19</sup> the fact that the law is incapable of making man righteous,<sup>20</sup> and the all-sufficiency of the Christ as man’s salvation,<sup>21</sup> all point to the supernatural character of this work of new life.

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<sup>18</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 218.

<sup>19</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 218.

<sup>20</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 219.

<sup>21</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 220.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHOD OR MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

As mentioned earlier, though Hodge clearly identifies the work of new life as a supernatural work, this does not preclude human agency for the work. Hodge’s view might best be described as collaboration: sanctification calls for “unremitting and strenuous exertion” but is nonetheless “the work of God.”<sup>1</sup> The will, as part of the soul, is renewed and given new life; therefore, though the will is used to participate in the collaborative work of sanctification, it is able to do so only because of the initial regenerative work of God and its ongoing support by that same sustaining grace. More specifically, this collaboration is carried out in six specific ways.

#### **Faith**

First, the soul is led to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Conversion is the beginning of sanctification not because it has inherent sanctifying power or efficacy, but because it is the first step of a salvation process that God pledges himself to complete. Sanctification cannot be separated from conversion; therefore, conversion secures the eventual and total sanctification for all those who are truly converted to Jesus Christ by receiving him in faith.<sup>2</sup> This faith unites the soul to Christ. Here Hodge is in line with Madame Guyon:

"Your way to God begins on the day of your conversion, for conversion marks your soul's initial return to God. From that moment you begin to live and have your being by the means of His grace. After your conversion, your own spirit—the human spirit (which is deep within your inmost being)—is touched by God and is made alive and

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 226.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 226-227.

functioning. Your spirit—in turn—invites your soul to compose itself and to turn within, there to find the God who has newly come to reside at the center of your being. Your spirit instructs your soul that, since God is more present deep within you, He cannot be found anywhere else. Henceforth, He must be sought within. And He must be enjoyed there alone."<sup>3</sup>

### **Hodge and the Mystics**

It is somewhat surprising that Hodge, the prototypical common sense realism theologian, would give so much space to the treatment of mysticism. In his *Systematic Theology*, he gives a full 40 pages, one entire chapter of the first volume to the subject. While much his treatment is critical, more of his treatment is not only sympathetic, but complementary.

This is especially true for those whom Hodge terms the “evangelical mystics.” In this category Hodge identifies: Bernard of Clairveaux, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, Thomas a Kempis, and others. While Hodge says that their definition of union with God is no scriptural, he does agree with them that union with God is the great desire of true religion. He notes that they were great blessings to the church because their influence “was directed to the preservation of the inward life of religion in opposition to the formality and ritualism which then prevailed in the church.”<sup>4</sup>

It is this emphasis on the inward life that draws Hodge so much to the mystics. Here they would very much agree. Both Hodge and the mystics agree that the essence of true religion is the union of man with God. Where they disagree is the means to that union. While the mystics maintain that this communion with God is communicated directly between God and man; Hodge says that this direct communication, though possible, is not the normal and belongs to the category of miracle. So, while he agrees that the “idea on which mysticism is founded is scriptural and true,” namely the union of

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<sup>3</sup> Guyon, Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte, *Union with God* (Augusta, Me.: Christian Books, 1981), 55.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 79.

the soul to God, the means for bringing that about is not scriptural, that is, the direct communication by revelation from God to the individual.<sup>5</sup>

### **Union with Christ**

Second, having been united to God, the believer enjoys several essential benefits of that union. The first is “participation in his merits” or justification. This represents and constitutes a transferal from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, from being under the curse of sin to being in a state of favor and grace. Second, as a consequence of this union, believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Hodge stresses that this Holy Spirit is nothing less than the Spirit of Christ Himself: “Where the Spirit is, there Christ is; so that, the Spirit being with us, Christ is with us; and if the Spirit dwells in us, Christ dwells in us.”<sup>6</sup>

This indwelling of the holy Spirit is critical because by its indwelling the Spirit communicates to the believer the full life of Christ so that Christ is formed in us. Before moving on, I must point out that there is a meta-connection in the scriptures between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. In other words, the scriptures teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in general is to save by uniting us to Christ. In Titus 3:3-6, it is the Holy Spirit “richly poured out” that accomplishes the salvation of man through regeneration, renewal, so that we may be justified. The rich pouring out of the Holy Spirit is what brings all the aspects of salvation in this passage from regeneration all the way to the “hope of eternal life.” Likewise, while the Spirit’s work in Ezekiel 36 and 37 certainly includes regeneration, it would be a mistake to limit the Spirit’s work in this passage to this one aspect. Rather, the larger context invites us to view the Holy Spirit as the means by which the salvation of God is effected in the lives of believers *in toto*.

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<sup>5</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 228.

The scriptures also speak of union with Christ as a meta-connection. In other words, we are saved because we are in Christ/united to Christ. Paul says that all of our needs – and we may insert here the entire *ordo salutis* – will be supplied according to the riches in glory in Christ (Phil 4:19) so that we are “complete in him (Col 2:10).” Further, this union with Christ *in toto* is effected by the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the glory given him by the Father, he will give to his children (John 17:22), and that as the Father is in Him, he is in his children. And since he has just told the same audience that he will give them the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them, we can conclude that the glory and the presence of Himself is realized in the life of believers through the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the passage that speaks most directly to the meta work of the Spirit being union with Christ is John 16:14-15, “He (the Spirit) will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” It would be a mistake to limit this work of the Spirit here to mere transfer of knowledge and wisdom. Jesus says, “all that the Father has is mine.” What the Spirit is transmitting is not mere knowledge but the substance/benefits of Christ. What the Spirit declares must be “received” because the words convey what is actually “given to believers (1 Cor 2:12-14).” The work of the Spirit here is not mere cognitive knowledge or understanding of the things of God, but is rather an effectual declaration of the riches of Christ into the life of the believer so that what is declared is actually manifested in their lives.

### **Inward Work of the Holy Spirit**

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit becomes, then, the source of a new spiritual life. This spiritual life is marked by a complete and total conformity into the image of Christ so that all that is not of God is removed – and all that is in conformity with Christ is developed and matured. This, for Hodge, is the coming into truth. “True” for Hodge is

synonymous with “that which is of God.” Conversely sin is synonymous with lies, deceit, and falsehood. To be sanctified, then, is to come away from all that is untrue and be conformed into all that is true and right and holy. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and fulfills the prayer of Christ for the church, “Sanctify them in truth” (John 17:17).<sup>7</sup>

Hodge further grounds this principle in God’s relation to the world and the power of the divine word. God speaks and it is done. Hodge infers from this that the way God effects His will generally is through the power of the divine word which, when spoken, creates reality. His conclusion: “As in the external world He created all things by the word of His power; so all effects in the moral or Spiritual world are accomplished by a volition or command....(because) to call...is to effect, to cause to be, or to occur.”<sup>8</sup> So, while Hodge agrees with Calvin and Westminster that the union with Christ is the unifying motif of the work of the holy Spirit in the life of believers, he adds richness to the doctrine by elaborating on *how* the Spirit does so: the Spirit unites believers to Christ through speaking the divine word which effect that which is spoken.

This connection between word and Spirit correlates with the role of the Holy Spirit and the word of God in general: while the divine word originates in the Father, and is communicated through the Son, it terminates in the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> This understanding also adds further clarity to John 16:14-15: “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” Jesus is teaching here that the work of the Spirit is not simply to speak “all that is in Christ” to the church, but to speak it effectually, to cause it to be, to cause it to occur in their lives. All that the Father has belongs to Jesus –

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<sup>7</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 230.

<sup>8</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 641.

<sup>9</sup> Allison, Gregg R., and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit. Theology for the People of God*. (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2020), 307.



and all that that belongs to Jesus will be effectually spoken by the Spirit into the lives of believers so that the believer who obediently listens to the words of the Holy Spirit will be united to Christ.

This is an immensely important aspect to the spirituality of Hodge and connects him most directly to the evangelical mystics. The vision of the Christian life espoused by Hodge is one that is in constant dialogue with God through the work of the Holy Spirit such that all that good (the fruit of the Spirit) is “called forth...more or less effectually every day the believer passes on earth.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Communion of Saints**

Fifth, the spiritual life is developed through the communion of saints, that is, the fellowship of believers as the church of Jesus Christ. Unlike at least some of the mystics, Hodge says that the Christian life was not meant to be lived in isolation and solitude, but in “contact and collision” with his fellow man.

Noticeably absent from Hodge is how the spiritual life is developed and “called into exercise” through the communion of saints. Aside from the fact that Christians must have an object to love, be kind to, show generosity to, etc., it is not clear from Hodge how the communion of the saints elicits growth in the believer. Here the mystics are more developed in their understanding by noting that because every believer is indwelt by the living Christ through his Spirit, they can become the presence of Christ to others.

### **Prayer**

Surprisingly, perhaps, Hodge says that the primary way believers receive the communications of the Holy Spirit is through prayer. This is a remarkable statement. If, as we have seen, sanctification is primarily the union of the soul to God through Christ,

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<sup>10</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 230.

and The primary work of the Holy Spirit is the union of the believer to Christ, then to maintain prayer as the primary way to effectually participate and invite the work of the holy spirit is remarkable. Hodge says that prayer is not, primarily, seeking help from God or the expression of faith, or the mode of communion with God. It is, rather, the “appointed means of obtaining the Holy Spirit.”<sup>11</sup>

It is through prayer that the life of God in the soul of man is primarily communicated. Hodges stresses that the work of the Spirit is central: it is the spirit that enlightens, teaches, persuades. It is through the spirit that we are led in the work of sanctification. Hodges frequently uses the term “communication” here to describe the specific work of the Spirit.

Before moving on, I must point out that there is a meta-connection in the scriptures between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. In other words, the scriptures teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in general is to save by uniting us to Christ. In Titus 3:3-6, it is the Holy Spirit “richly poured out” that accomplishes the salvation of man through regeneration, renewal, so that we may be justified. The rich pouring out of the Holy Spirit is what brings all the aspects of salvation in this passage from regeneration all the way to the “hope of eternal life.” Likewise, while the Spirit’s work in Ezekiel 36 and 37 certainly includes regeneration, it would be a mistake to limit the Spirit’s work in this passage to this one aspect. Rather, the larger context invites us to view the Holy Spirit as the means by which the salvation of God is effected in the lives of believers *in toto*.

The scriptures also speak of union with Christ as a meta-connection. In other words, we are saved because we are in Christ/united to Christ. Paul says that all of our needs – and we may insert here the entire *ordo salutis* – will be supplied according to the riches in glory in Christ (Phil 4:19) so that we are “complete in him (Col 2:10).”

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 231.

Further, this union with Christ *in toto* is effected by the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the glory given him by the Father, he will give to his children (John 17:22), and that as the Father is in Him, he is in his children. And since he has just told the same audience that he will give them the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them, we can conclude that the glory and the presence of Himself is realized in the life of believers through the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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### **The Word**

Second to the work of prayer is the role of scriptures in the sanctifying work of God. The role of the spirit is to bring us in line with the truth; the spirit is, in fact, the spirit of truth. This point cannot be stressed enough: for Hodge, sanctification is merely the conforming of the soul to truth. Said another way, to depart from God is to leave the truth and enter into the realm of lies, distortion, and deception. The process of sanctification, therefore, is the movement of the soul away from all that is false into the realm of truth.

The more the truth is brought before the mind; the more we commune with it, entering into its import, applying it to our own case, appropriating its principles,

appropriating its principles, appreciating its motives, rejoicing in its promises, trembling at its threatenings, rising by its influence from what is seen and temporal to what is unseen and eternal, the more we may expect to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so as to approve whatever is holy, just and good.<sup>12</sup>

Here the methodology of Hodge comes into clearer focus. Hodge agreed with the mystics that sanctification happens when the soul comes into communion with God and receives the revelation of God. Where he disagreed is that the communication comes directly from God; that the truth was immediately perceived by each individual. Rather, Hodge says we receive that truth when we receive the Word of God, we hear his truth spoken to us personally through the scriptures and have it applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. We speak to God personally through prayer and invite the holy spirit to do his sanctifying work by applying the truth of God's Word to us individually so that we are conformed more and more to the image of God through the communication of truth through the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Sacraments**

But Hodges goes on to say that this work of sanctification by the spirit also happens in the context of worship. Worship is the "appointed means of holding communion with God and receiving the communications of his grace."<sup>13</sup> It is not simply that the worship of God is commanded and a good and right thing. Hodge goes further.

The sacraments are not merely symbols, they are conveyors of grace. They exhibit and seal the truth and the promises of God, and convey to those who wrongly receive them the blessings which they represent."<sup>14</sup> For Hodge, then, the sacraments are the means by which the communications of God's grace are brought to fruition in the life of the believer.

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<sup>12</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 233.

<sup>13</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 234.

<sup>14</sup> Hodge, *The Way of Life*, 234.

It should be noted here that Hodge affirms the essential reformed understanding of the conveying of grace through the sacraments. The sacraments convey grace not through the elements themselves or by virtue of the one administering them but solely due to the “to the blessing of Christ and the cooperation of His Spirit, and that such efficacy is experienced only by believers.”<sup>15</sup> The sacraments, then are one of the primary means by which the grace of God in deepening the union of believers to Christ is made effectual. It is therefore one of the primary means of sanctification and, because the sacraments are only rightly administered in worship by those ordained to minister them, only in the worship of God in His church.

### **Kingly Work of Christ**

Lastly, one of Hodge’s seemingly unique contributions to the means by which Christians live the spiritual life is his treatment of the kingly office of Christ. The Shorter Catechism helpfully defines this work as “subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.” But of the three offices of Christ, his kingly work is the most difficult to apply to everyday life and has, therefore, received the least amount of development.

Hodge helpfully notes that it is through the kingly work of Christ that the risen Christ helps his people. The enemies of believers are both inward and outward, seen and unseen. More specifically they are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The strength of the believer is not that he is left to his own to fight these enemies, but that he fights them in the strength and power of Christ (Eph 6:10). The weapons are supplied by him, and the disposition and skill to use them are supplied by him as well as their “ever present helper.”

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<sup>15</sup> Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 500.

Here Hodge helpfully fleshes out what it means for Christ to live in him believers in a very practical way. It is through the constant supply of Christ's life and power that believers are enabled to fight and wage war against all difficulties whether they are spiritual attacks, the corruption of the flesh, or the difficulties allowed by God's providence.

CHAPTER 6  
CONCLUSION

I have traced the theology of Charles Hodge through four categories: what sanctification is not, the accompanying characteristics of sanctification that are essential to its genuineness but not its character or essence, the essential components of sanctification, and the means of sanctification. For Hodge, sanctification may be defined as “a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God.”<sup>1</sup> It is brought about as the Holy Spirit further unites the whole man to God in Jesus Christ resulting in a new life and deepened relationship with a personally God with whom we have the deepest of personal and intimate knowledge.

Though this work of God results in holiness of life and love of others, that is not the essence of the new life. And while works through the ordinary means of grace to bring about this deepened union, they are not automatic nor the thing itself. Hodge, then, is much more like the evangelical mystics than his reputation may presume. And if Hodge is rightly called the Pope of Presbyterianism, modern Presbyterianism may have to alter its definition of “pure” presbyterian theology of sanctification.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 208.

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## ABSTRACT

### CHARLES HODGE: EVANGELICAL MYSTIC

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Princeton theologian Charles Hodge is the emblematic American Presbyterian. Hodge's spirituality, however, is not only misunderstood, it is largely ignored as the best example of Presbyterian piety and spirituality. Some traditions term this area of theology "spiritual formation" or "the Christian life." Hodge called it "Holy Living" in his book *The Way of Life*. Hodge says that the essence of sanctification is "a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God." His theology of sanctification and the Christian life is directly linked to John Calvin and the Westminster Standards and therefore can provide a corrective influence on current Presbyterian misunderstandings of sanctification in the church today. Hodge's articulation of sanctification as "a participation of the Divine nature, or the conformity of the soul to God" is the purest form of Presbyterian sanctification theology because it is the most immediate and direct line to Westminster and Calvin.

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