

IMPROVING EVANGELICAL ETHICS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM AND A PROPOSED SOLUTION

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My pilgrimage as an evangelical Christian has spanned more than forty years. Through no contribution of my own, these have been years of remarkable outward vitality and progress in evangelicalism. This general period has witnessed the birth and rapid growth of the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical Theological Society, and a number of evangelical denominations and fellowships. Since about 1950 Billy Graham has become famous worldwide because of the tens of thousands of people converted in his mass-evangelism crusades. In the 1960s and 1970s the general public became aware of conservative Protestantism more than ever through the medium of television. In 1976 born-again Jimmy Carter was inaugurated President of the United States and a *Christianity Today*-Gallup poll concluded that increasing numbers of people were claiming evangelical Christianity as their religious preference. *Time* magazine proclaimed 1976 as the year of the evangelical.¹ Since 1965 American evangelical churches have grown at an average rate of eight percent while liberal denominations have declined at an almost five-percent rate. About forty million Americans call themselves evangelical Protestants.² With the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980 and the growing momentum of the Moral Majority, the 1980s were called the decade of the evangelical. A mid-June 1990 Gallup poll revealed that the percentage of Americans affirming a personal commitment to Jesus Christ rose from sixty percent in 1978 and sixty-six percent in 1988 to seventy-four percent in 1990. Ninety-five percent of these testify to a "born-again" experience.³

I. THE EVANGELICAL PROBLEM

Since evangelicals are generally recognized to be the base center for this nation's morality,⁴ one could predict an environment of higher ethical standards than ever as we begin the last decade of this century. Instead,

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¹ K. S. Kantzer, "Epitaph for the Eighties," *Christianity Today* 33/18 (December 15, 1989) 18.

² *U.S. News and World Report* 105/24 (December 19, 1988) 53.

³ *Los Angeles Times* (Orange county edition; September 22, 1990) F21.

⁴ Interview with Dean Kelley, director for religious liberty, National Council of Churches, cited by *U.S. News and World Report* 105/24 (December 19, 1988) 54.

however, we seem to have reached an all-time low in national behavior. We see legalized abortion claiming one-and-a-half million lives a year, a still-growing pornographic industry that annually brings in eight to ten billion dollars, eighteen million people addicted to alcohol and twenty-eight million to drugs, and homosexuality—a thoroughly disapproved lifestyle thirty years ago—accepted as legal and increasingly respectable.⁵ While gaining political and numerical victories, evangelicals are losing the war of morality. On the threshold of the 1990s the “Outlook 1990” calendar of *U.S. News and World Report* has a symbolic reminder of our failure. The last item in the listing reads: “Televangelist Jim Bakker, sentenced to 45 years in prison for fraud and conspiracy, may be eligible for parole (October [1999]).”⁶

We were commissioned to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13-14) and to bring people to glorify God by our good works (Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12), but the enemy has us on the run. Where have we failed? I propose that we have made a basic mistake in strategy, that of thinking we can best influence our society with large numbers and/or strong political clout. We are perhaps winning the battle of numbers and political influence, but we are losing the war of morals. There is nothing wrong with external growth, but it obviously will not resolve our ethical problem.

II. POSSIBLE ETHICAL IMPROVEMENTS

What is the solution? Can we reverse the downward spiral? Will better Biblical and theological scholarship do it? Hopefully this will play a part, and we cannot afford to be without it. But this alone will not effect the needed improvement. Will stronger Christian colleges, universities and seminaries stem the tide of evil? Efforts to establish these are most worthwhile, but they alone will hardly change our cultural standards. Are stronger local churches the solution? We need them, and should work toward establishing them, because every community needs the witness of a group of Christians. This alone, however, will not substantially change the coming decade. Do we need more direct frontal attacks against prevailing sin in our preaching and campaigning? This is desirable, but this alone cannot raise ethical standards.

I suggest that our greatest need is more individuals whose lives are holy. This more than anything will change the culture around us and chart a course back to high morality. Our exemplary actions will impact people far more than what we say.⁷ They are not so much impressed with the cleverness of our rhetoric as with the genuineness of our behavior. We need a focus on sanctification or spirituality such as we discussed at our thirty-ninth annual meeting three years ago. Such emphases have not

⁵ Kantzer, “Epitaph” 18.

⁶ L. A. Carle, “Points in Time from '90 to '99,” *U.S. News and World Report* 107/25 (December 25, 1989) 5.

⁷ J. I. Packer, “Godliness in Ephesians,” *Crux* 25/1 (March 1989) 9.

been lacking in recent years,⁸ but I bring a more restricted focus. I fear we have given only passing notice to the cognitive basis of sanctification and thus have not done justice to a major thrust of relevant NT teaching. The following discussion pertains to the foundation for upgrading personal holiness.

III. A PROPOSED FOUNDATION FOR ETHICAL IMPROVEMENT

Adequate cognitive preparation for making correct moral choices requires a Biblically realistic look at ourselves. The last decade of the twentieth century brings with it an overwhelming and unapologetic emphasis on self. Our society advocates attention to one's own being as desirable and necessary. For example, the pro-choice movement highlights a woman's right to decide the use of her own body at the possible expense of an unborn child she is bearing. Among evangelicals the contemporary stress on self is nowhere more evident than in attempts to integrate Biblical teaching into various psychological theories of the day.⁹ Evangelical voices are echoing the need for good self-image and the like. Yet something basic is missing.

My proposal is to rediscover a missing ingredient in sanctification through a refined Biblical perspective on the subject of self-concept. Church history has taught that an extremist position can be a call to scrutinize relevant Biblical data more carefully. The current extreme emphasis on self dictates a closer examination of NT teaching on the subject.¹⁰

1. *Jesus and self-concept.* In the gospels Jesus first broached the subject toward the end of the Galilean-ministry period,¹¹ in the late winter of

⁸ See for example F. A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971); *Five Views of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); R. C. Sproul, "Heresies of Holiness," *Christianity Today* 30/1 (January 17, 1986) 30-31; *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988); Packer, "Godliness" 8-16; R. L. Mayhue, *Spiritual Intimacy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1990).

⁹ Eg. R. H. Schuler, *Self Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco: Word, 1982) 27, in commenting on theology's failure "to accommodate and apply proven insights in human behavior as revealed by twentieth-century psychologists," writes: "A widespread tension has too long existed between psychologists and theologians. . . . Conflict between theology and psychology points to a need for growth and accommodation until the contradiction in thought is reconciled on the altar of truth. What we need is a theological restructuring which synergizes scientific and spiritual truth as related to the human being."

¹⁰ Selection of passages for this study is based on the semantic field of words and word groups pertaining to the mind (cf. G. Osborne, "The Mind and Its Place in Spiritual Growth," paper read at the thirty-ninth annual meeting of ETS, Boston, December 4, 1987; "Mind Control or Spirit-Controlled Minds," in *Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World* [ed. J. D. Woodbridge; Chicago: Moody, 1985] 56), the semantic fields pertaining to "death" and "life," and the unusual grammatical phenomenon of a dative case following a verb of dying, as explained below.

¹¹ This study endorses a traditional approach to the gospels that advocates a harmonization of the gospel accounts in reconstructing a reasonably accurate history of the life of Christ (see R. L. Thomas and S. N. Gundry, "Is a Harmony of the Gospels Legitimate?," in *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels* [San Francisco: Harper, 1988] 249-253). It differs sharply from the skepticism or uncertainty of some evangelical redaction critics who question the possibility of harmonization (e.g. R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological*

A.D. 29,¹² when he sent out the twelve for an expanded outreach in Galilee. He anticipated an unfriendly reception of their message, probably because of his public repudiation by Jewish leaders a few weeks earlier (Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30). He sought to prepare the messengers by comparing their love¹³ for family and self with their love for himself (Matt 10:37-39).¹⁴ He said, "The one who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and the one who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. The one who finds his life will lose it, and the one who loses his life for my sake will find it."¹⁵ This was the first direct reference to what I call the "death-life paradox in Christian self-concept." Here begins a series of lessons extending through at least the next forty years (or sixty years if the date of the gospel of John is considered) in which Christ's followers received instruction on how to view themselves.¹⁶

Jesus spoke of taking one's cross¹⁷ and losing one's life; this is death. At the same time, he told about the obligation to follow himself and to find

Art [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982] 639; G. R. Osborne, "Round Four: The Redaction Debate Continues," *JETS* 28/4 [1985] 407, 409. See R. L. Thomas, "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Redaction Criticism," *JETS* 29/4 (1986) 452-453.

¹² The dates cited here and below are approximate and assume a crucifixion year of A.D. 30 (see R. L. Thomas and S. N. Gundry, "The Day and Year of Christ's Crucifixion" and "Chronology of the Life of Christ," in *A Harmony of the Gospels* [NASB] [San Francisco: Harper, 1978] 320-328; "The Day and Year of Christ's Crucifixion" and "Chronology of the Life of Christ," in *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels* [San Francisco: Harper, 1988] 311-319). For those assuming another year of crucifixion, such as A.D. 33 (e.g. H. W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977] 65-144), the sequence of developing revelation regarding self-concept would be the same as proposed in this discussion.

¹³ His word that entails self-concept is *philōn*, used twice in Matt 10:37. It denotes a state of mind compelled naturally by sense and emotion (A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* [London: Macmillan, 1961] 148).

¹⁴ The theory that Matthew 10 is an editorially constructed collection of sayings from different contexts and not a single discourse of Jesus (R. E. Morosco, "Redaction Criticism and the Evangelical: Matthew 10 a Test Case," *JETS* 22/4 [1979] 323-331) is untenable because of the introductory and concluding formulas used by Matthew to clarify that this was a unified discourse delivered by Jesus on a single occasion (Matt 10:5; 11:1).

¹⁵ Renderings of the Biblical text in this essay are my translations unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁶ The progressive development of the "death-life paradox in Christian self-concept" provides a good illustration of the unity in the NT from author to author. Verbal identity is not always present, but a conceptual continuity built upon diversity of terminology and syntax is conspicuous. Perhaps the best summary of the death-life paradox is Paul's command in Rom 6:11: "So also consider yourselves to be, on the one hand, dead to sin, but on the other, alive to God in Christ Jesus." The conciseness of this guideline to self-conceptualization is in part the reason why Romans 6 is generally viewed as the central passage on Christian sanctification (cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1964] 30; M. Silva, *Philippians* [Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago: Moody, 1988] 190).

¹⁷ In light of the frequent crucifixions they had witnessed, *stauros* to the twelve was a symbol of death. Taking one's cross meant a commitment to die for Christ's sake if necessary (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* [2d ed.; ed. J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989], 1. 286). Carson notes that rabbinic parallels regarding masters and disciples required placing the master above one's father but allowed a disciple to retain his own personal interest as primary. Jesus, on the other hand, required the

one's life;¹⁸ this is life. This is how the twelve were to regard themselves. This was their perceptual fortification in confronting animosity toward their message.

A few months later as Jesus climaxed his six-month program of special training for the twelve he introduced this perspective again (Matt 16:24-26 = Mark 8:34-37 = Luke 9:23-25) and said, "If anyone desires to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for the sake of me and the gospel will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his life? For what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8:34-37). This was near Caesarea Philippi when he first taught them about the future building of the Church (Matt 16:18) and his coming death and resurrection (16:21). Speaking this time to a larger group that included the multitude,¹⁹ Jesus' conceptual word was desire²⁰ rather than love, and he referred more specifically to self-denial as an equivalent of taking up one's cross.²¹ This is the same as losing one's earthly life, if necessary, for Christ's sake. The other side of the paradox, he says, is following Christ and finding lasting spiritual life. This advice at Caesarea Philippi followed the prediction of Christ's personal suffering and served notice that his true followers must join him in suffering. The dual self-concept provided them with the outlook necessary to endure the obligatory hardships.

death of self from his disciples (D. A. Carson, "Matthew" [Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 8. 257).

¹⁸ *Zōē* is a favorite word for "life" in Pauline references to the death-life paradox (e.g. Rom 6:11), but *psychē* easily falls into the same semantic category (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1. 261-262). A twofold sense of *psychē* permits it to refer to lasting, eternal, spiritual life in the positive part of the antithesis and to earthly, temporary, physical life in the negative. This use of the noun serves as a periphrasis for the reflexive pronoun *heauton*, reflecting a Semitic background of the terminology (J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908], 1. 87).

¹⁹ After preliminary words to the twelve alone about his coming rejection, Jesus summoned the multitude to join the audience and hear what he said about self-concept (Mark 8:34). The words must therefore be understood in light of a multitude with mixed persuasions, some already believers in Christ and others not. This instruction is not limited to telling saved people how to attain a higher level of spirituality (the multitude was present) nor is it limited to unbelievers, telling them how to be saved (the twelve were present [contra Z. C. Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980) 83-84; J. F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 134-135]). It has something for each category of listeners. For one, it provokes to self-examination regarding salvation. For the other, it challenges to greater dedication to Christ.

²⁰ *Thelei* (Matt 10:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) and *thelē* (Matt 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24) convey the notion of self-concept here. A discussion of whether the gospels at times contain the *ipsissima verba* of Christ is out of place here (see Thomas and Gundry, "Problems and Principles of Harmonization," in *NIV Harmony* 296-297), but the close agreement in terminology in the three gospel accounts of this episode lends credence to the possibility that Christ sometimes used the Greek language (see Thomas and Gundry, "The Languages Jesus Spoke," in *NIV Harmony* 301-302) and that the Spirit enabled the writers to convey Jesus' words with high precision.

²¹ Marshall notes that the saying about taking up one's cross was equivalent to the attitude of self-denial that viewed life in this world as already finished (I. H. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 373).

The next time Jesus addressed this subject was about six months later, during the period of his Perea ministry. In instructing great multitudes he spoke of the cost of discipleship in terms of hatred²² of one's family and even his own earthly life (*psychē*) and added: "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26-27). For those listeners who were already his followers, this was a call to greater dedication. For others who were there only because of curiosity, this was a stimulus to becoming followers in a true sense by believing him for salvation.

A little later, when Jesus was just beginning his journey to Jerusalem to be crucified, he once again reiterated the paradox of a Christian self-concept, this time while teaching about his second advent (Luke 17:33). His words were: "Whoever seeks to acquire his life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive." Putting a premium on²³ the allurements of this world is tantamount to the error of Lot's wife (17:32). This is inadequate preparation for the Lord's return. Adequate preparation entails dispensing with such special interests and receiving instead true and lasting spiritual life.²⁴ The focus on a death-life consciousness continues.

In the last recorded occasion of Jesus' reference to the paradox he again related the perspective of his followers to his own. It was during passion week, the day after his triumphal entry, when a group of Greeks came to Philip with a request to see Jesus. By his response Jesus implied the inappropriateness of granting such an audience until after his crucifixion.²⁵ He then referred figuratively to his own death and told his followers to be willing to undergo the same (John 12:24-26).²⁶ As painful as it was, Jesus had to die to bring others to life. The application of this to his followers was that they must pass through death to their own eternal life.²⁷ He spoke of the necessity of a grain of wheat dying before it could be fruitful, and again he contrasted love and hatred for one's earthly life with their resultant loss and acquisition of eternal life. His terminology on this occasion was more specific in several respects: his labeling of the "death" side of the paradox by use of the term *apothanē* (12:24), the phrase *en tō kosmō toutō* to identify earthly life as the object of hate, and his clarification of the lasting "life"

²² See *misei* in Luke 14:26, which is the opposite of *philōn* used in Matt 10:37. Relatively speaking, hatred of one's own is equivalent to loving Christ more than anyone, including oneself. This draws upon a Semitic sense of the word ("love less"; cf. Marshall, *Luke* 592).

²³ The use of *zētēsē . . . peripoiesasthai* views self-concept as a quest to acquire for oneself (note the middle voice of *peripoiesasthai*).

²⁴ The use of *zōgonēsei* in association with *psychē* in Luke 17:33 puts a double emphasis on life ("make life alive") and provides a transition to Paul's later use of *zōē* in further development of self-concept.

²⁵ R. L. Jeske, "John 12:20-36," *Int* 43/3 (1989) 293.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 293-294. Jeske says this call to follow Jesus into dying is central to NT theology. Along with several of the gospel parallels already mentioned he cites Gal 2:19-20. He fails to note the centrality of the resurrection side of the paradox, however.

²⁷ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 1. 474. Brown is impressed with the authenticity and independence of this tradition and does not see it as an adaptation of the synoptic tradition (pp. 473-474).

side of the paradox by means of the phrase *eis zōēn aiōnion* in association with *psychē* (12:25). To hate one's life in the positive sense is to lose the life that is in this world; this is death. Life in the positive sense, the life that is to be guarded, is the life connected with eternal life. We can be sure of only Philip and Andrew as recipients of this instruction (12:22), but perhaps the crowd, including the Greeks, was within earshot if the episode came immediately after the second cleansing of the temple (cf. Luke 19:48; John 12:20).

Jesus again used "love" and "hate" (cf. Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26) to portray the wrong and right perspectives on this present life (John 12:25) and pointed to following himself as synonymous with correct self-perception (12:26). These expressions are ways of alluding to the volitional and intellectual sides of self-concept.

On five recorded occasions Jesus elaborated on the death-life paradox. We do not know how many other times he taught it, but the number is probably considerable because of what his followers said about it later. Besides the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that came between twenty-five and sixty years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, we have evidence from Paul and Peter to demonstrate the importance of this theme during the composition of the NT.

2. *Paul and self-concept.* About twenty-five years after Christ's ascension, Paul wrote his soteriological epistles: 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians.²⁸ In these he said much about the subject under discussion, but his perspective was advanced because he was looking back and incorporated Jesus' death and resurrection into the self-concept Christ emphasized so heavily. He spoke of Christ's servants as "always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be exhibited in our body" (2 Cor 4:10). To "carry around" in this context is to maintain a certain mental outlook regarding oneself.²⁹ Only through this death-life outlook could one survive the hardships of Christian service as described in that paragraph of 2 Corinthians 4 (cf. 4:8-9). He explained further: "For we who live are always delivered to death because of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be exhibited in our mortal flesh" (4:11; cf. also 4:12-14; 13:4). Along with the death-hardship concept, the goal of Christ's servants is to experience his resurrection in this present life.³⁰

²⁸ This late dating of Galatians along with a South Galatian destination is my preference, largely because of the chronological difficulty of fitting the epistle into the late 40s A.D. This issue has little effect on the chronological development of the self-concept theme, however.

²⁹ C. Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [1859]) 94-95; P. E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 141-143. M. J. Harris, "2 Corinthians" (Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10. 343, distinguishes between Paul's hardships and a once-for-all identification with Christ in his death. This is an overrefinement. The consciousness of that identification provides inner strength to endure those hardships, so the two are inseparable. This connection is borne out by Paul's unquestioned reference to identification with Christ in death and resurrection in the next chapter (2 Cor 5:14-17; cf. Harris, "2 Corinthians" 352).

³⁰ G. M. Styler, "The Basis of Obligation in Paul's Christology and Ethics," *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University,

Paul built upon this paradox again in 2 Corinthians, this time to express the proper motivation for ministers of reconciliation (5:14-17).³¹ Their death with Christ has freed them for a new life with new aims and new purposes.³² One so employed does not serve for the purpose of selfish boasting (cf. 5:12) or as one who lives to himself (cf. 5:15) but as one who has died and now lives to God a new kind of existence, no longer centered on self but centered on Christ (5:14-15), as a new creation for whom old things have passed away and all things have become new (5:17). Intelligent Christian existence rests on the realization that, though still part of an old creation, the believer is God's new creation through the death and resurrection of Christ.³³ *Krinantas touto* ("judging this") (5:14) represents this as the self-appraisal of those with the right motivation for inviting people to be reconciled to God.³⁴

Romans has the most direct and complete development of Christian self-concept. A survey of this nature can only sample its extensive treatment. The simplest starting point is Rom 6:11 where *logizesthe heautous* plainly specifies the proper concept of oneself.³⁵ Suggested translations and paraphrases of the expression include "regard yourselves,"³⁶ "infer yourselves,"³⁷ "recognize yourselves,"³⁸ "estimate yourselves,"³⁹ "look on yourselves,"⁴⁰ "reckon and appreciate yourselves,"⁴¹ "judge yourselves."⁴² In line with our study we could suggest "keep reflecting on this concept of yourselves." The command opens to Christians the reality by which they should understand their existence.⁴³

The reasoning that limits *heautous* to only the part of man that is under the domination of sin⁴⁴ is clearly erroneous. If only the sinful aspect of self

1973) 134; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper, 1973) 141.

³¹ Hodge, *Second Epistle* 134-137.

³² Barrett, *Second Epistle* 169.

³³ *Ibid.* 174-175.

³⁴ Hughes, *Second Epistle* 193.

³⁵ The strong consensus is that *logizesthe* is imperative rather than indicative because of the hortatory nature of the context that follows (e.g. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [5th ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902] 160; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, n.d.] 408; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965], 1. 225; E. F. Harrison, "Romans" [Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976] 713; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975, 1979], 1. 315; F. F. Bruce, *Romans* [rev. ed.; Tyndale NT Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985] 132).

³⁶ C. Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (London: Armstrong, 1896) 201.

³⁷ H. Alford, "The Epistle to the Romans," in *The Greek Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, 1909), 2. 369.

³⁸ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1. 315.

³⁹ Schnackenburg, *Baptism* 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Murray, *Romans* 226.

⁴² E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 171.

⁴³ G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper, 1969) 79.

⁴⁴ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans* 160.

is considered dead to sin, only that same part can be considered alive to God, according to the statement of the verse. The reflexive pronoun cannot be referred to the sinful part in the first half of the paradox and to the "new man" in the last half. The so-called true self that is allegedly the part alive to God is indistinguishable from the total person, who was formerly in slavery to sin. The same "self" is both dead to sin and alive to God because of union with Christ.⁴⁵ A Christian must think of himself in this light.

A special enrichment of the simple command of Rom 6:11 is the detailed introduction of 6:1-10 on which it is based. A careful analysis of the larger section exceeds the scope of this essay, but a summary statement notes that it treats God's perspective of the one identified with Christ in his death and resurrection. The Christian's goal is to cultivate the same concept of himself, to be intellectually and volitionally what God has made him.⁴⁶ Only then can he respond to sin's beckonings in the way a dead man would and to God's directions in the way the resurrected Christ would.⁴⁷

A methodological aspect of this study is worthy of mention. So far the sequence has followed conceptual and verbal similarities. Beginning in Corinthians and Romans a grammatical link is added. A syntactical novelty characterizes a group of NT passages⁴⁸ that contribute to the present theme, including Rom 6:10-11. This novelty consists of a verb for dying followed by the dative of either the reflexive pronoun (i.e. *heautō*, *heautois*) (Rom 14:7-8; 2 Cor 5:14-15), the noun *hamartia* (Rom 6:2, 10, 11; 1 Pet 2:24), or the noun *nomos* (Rom 7:4, 6; Gal 2:19; 6:4). In addition to these combinations, similar constructions with different words are in two other places (Rom 6:6-7; 1 Pet 4:1).⁴⁹ A verb for living followed by a dative is not novel and can be paralleled in many secular excerpts. One theory is that Paul invented the rare combination of dying and the dative as a special device to describe the antithesis involved in the death-life paradox.⁵⁰

The issue discussed by Rigaux in this group of passages is whether to identify the datives as datives of relation, datives of advantage, or datives of obligation. After considering a variety of factors, he concludes that a dative of relation is the only sense that accounts for all the occurrences.⁵¹ The point of interest for our study, however, is the recurrence of this construction in Paul and Peter when the subject is the death-life paradox. Apparently the concept was so foreign to humanistic views of personality that a device for expressing it was nonexistent. So it remained for the apostle to initiate an adequate expression of this self-concept.

⁴⁵ Schnackenburg, *Baptism* 44, calls death to sin the thesis and living to God the antithesis.

⁴⁶ In the terminology of Styler, "Obligation" 179, this is a command to "become what you are." See also C. F. D. Moule, "The New Life in Colossians 3:1-17," *RevExp* 70/4 (1973) 481, 491.

⁴⁷ Harrison, "Romans" 71; Bruce, *Romans* 132.

⁴⁸ B. Rigaux, "Death 'to Sin,' 'to Law,' and 'to the World': A Note on Certain Datives," in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (ed. C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982) 150-151.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 149-150.

⁵⁰ Unpublished essay by A. J. M. Wedderburn, cited by *ibid.* 151.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 157.

Death-life self-concept is also taught in the "living sacrifice" of Rom 12:1-2. Proper decisions about two debated issues lead to this inclusion. (1) *Sōmata* is better referred to the whole person, not just the physical body.⁵² The body as distinct from the soul could not be offered as a "rational" or "spiritual" sacrifice.⁵³ Also, a limitation to the physical body would unduly limit the scope of Paul's exhortation. Furthermore, in the closely related passage of Rom 6:11-13⁵⁴ *sōma* and *melē* are interchangeable with the reflexive pronoun referring to the whole self. Thus this is one of the places where *sōma* is essentially synonymous with the whole personality.⁵⁵ (2) Opting for the meaning of "logical" or "reasonable" rather than "spiritual" for the adjective *logikēn* is wiser because of the word's usage outside Scripture⁵⁶ and because of references to human rationality in the near and far contexts of Romans.⁵⁷

A reference to cognitive preparation is further confirmed by the reference to the renewing of the mind in v. 2. The noun *noos* of that verse, referring to moral thinking and knowing, connects with the *logikēn* of v. 1 and expresses the perceptual means of transforming the moral inward character.⁵⁸ As Paul begins the practical portion of this great epistle, the "mercies of God" prompt Christians who shared in Christ's death and resurrection to adopt a Rom 6:11 outlook regarding themselves.

Other parts of Romans contribute to the subject,⁵⁹ but we must proceed to Galatians, the last of Paul's soteriological epistles. Gal 2:19-20 is another conspicuous link in this conceptual chain. In the Galatians context, in the face of contrary peer pressure Paul insists on absolute severance from the law's requirements, including its restrictions on table fellowship with Gentiles. Paul's testimony, "I have been crucified with Christ," pinpoints the avenue of his death to the law, freeing him to mingle with Gentiles at every level.⁶⁰ Paradoxically, however, he still lives, though not

⁵² Contra R. H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 34-36.

⁵³ W. G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [1879]) 357.

⁵⁴ The absence of commands and exhortations between Romans 6 and Romans 12 shows the possibility that 12:1-2 begins a detailing of the general command for sanctification in 6:12-13 (cf. Murray, *Romans*, 2. 109). The use of *paristēmi* in both places (cf. 6:13 [twice], 16, 19 [twice]; 12:1) and the emphasis of both on holiness (6:19, 22; 12:1) strengthen this connection.

⁵⁵ BAGD 799.

⁵⁶ Cranfield, *Romans*, 2. 602.

⁵⁷ Note the mental connotations of *tou noos* in Rom 12:2 and *logizesthe* in 6:11.

⁵⁸ F. Godet, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956 [1880-81]) 283; Lenski, *Romans* 751.

⁵⁹ E.g. Rom 6:12-13; 7:1-6, 15-25. Besides the Romans passages cited, 14:7-9 contains terminology, concepts and constructions that strongly resemble 2 Cor 5:14-17 and Rom 6:11. Most conclude that its context is quite different, however, and that it does not fit the present thematic survey of the death-life antithesis related to self-concept (e.g. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2. 708 n. 4). Its close similarity to other parts of this survey, nevertheless, makes it tempting to consider the possibility that the purpose of Christ's death and resurrection as stated in Rom 14:9 is that he might be Lord over those who have died and been raised with him. Besides, this would furnish a reason for the otherwise inexplicable sequence of *nekrōn kai zōntōn* in that verse (F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Cleveland: World, 1961] 350).

⁶⁰ O. Schmoller, "The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," in *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (ed. J. P. Lange; New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1870), 7. 52; W. Hendriksen, *Exposi-*

in the former sense of having a separate existence. Now the resurrected Christ lives in him by virtue of the merging of two lives.⁶¹ This facilitated a more comprehensive service for God. Paul's self-perception illustrates the image all Christians should adopt: that of death in one sphere and life in another.⁶²

About five years later, Paul penned four epistles from a Roman prison. A classic passage in one of these contrasts cognitive outlook before conversion with how one should view himself after conversion. This is Eph 4:17-24. Living standards among the Asian addressees of this letter were very low, so low they resembled those of the Gentiles around them.⁶³ They had been taught the concept of putting off the old man and putting on the new, but they had not yet appropriated it as the foundation for moral decisions.⁶⁴ Paul urged them to put off the old man, the person before conversion who had been crucified with Christ, and to put on the new man, the one in whom the resurrected Christ lives. This antinomian concept was their intellectual preparation for combatting evil. The prescribed attitude of mind was to dispense with their old pagan identity and to contemplate their new identity in Christ.⁶⁵

The tension or tasiological factor created by this duality has sometimes been described as that created by the positional versus the practical, the already versus the not yet, or the indicative versus the imperative of the

tion of Galatians (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) 107; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 144.

⁶¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d. [1865]) 119; C. J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Minneapolis: James Family, 1978 [1854]) 43; H. N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 106; H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 124; R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 123-124. Styler, "Obligation" 183, writes: "Christ does not bid me to be myself, he calls me to live in him."

⁶² Paul's self-concept lies behind the statement and exhortation of Gal 5:24-25 also. "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh" means to crucify the flesh by means of looking upon oneself as identified with Christ in his crucifixion in the same sense as 2:19-20 (Bruce, *Galatians* 256). "If we live in the Spirit" views living as an implementation of Christ's resurrection life through the Holy Spirit.

⁶³ Cf. Eph 4:17-19; "begin to walk worthily," 4:1; "stop letting the sun go down on your wrath," 4:26; "steal no longer," 4:28; etc.

⁶⁴ This paragraph has eleven words that belong to the semantic field of "mind" words (*noos* [v. 17], *dianoia* [v. 18], *agnoian* [v. 18], *apēlgekotes* [v. 19], *emathete* [v. 20], *kardias* [v. 18], *ēkousate* [v. 21], *edidachthēte* [v. 21], *alētheia* [v. 21], *noos* [v. 23], *altheias* [v. 24]). Its attention to right concepts is well validated. Paul's plea at this point in the epistle is for his readers to begin thinking right as a basis for right conduct, which he discusses in Eph 4:25 ff. The imperatival force of the infinitives *apothesthai* (4:22) and *endysasthai* (4:24) continues the imperatival force of the earlier part of the paragraph (e.g. *peripatein*, 4:17) and the chapter (e.g. *peripatēsai*, 4:1) and is confirmed by the mandatory thrust of *ananeousthai* (4:23), which parallels them (cf. H. Alford, *The Greek Testament* [Chicago: Moody, 1968] 123; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961] 551; M. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* [AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974] 499; Bruce, *Galatians* 358).

⁶⁵ Packer, "Godliness" 14.

Christian life.⁶⁶ It exists because a Christian is a citizen of the new age while he still lives in the old age.⁶⁷

In his parallel epistle to the Colossians, Paul depended heavily upon this paradoxical, death-life frame of mind.⁶⁸ This perspective is the path to counteracting wrongly motivated attention to external rules (Col 2:20-22)⁶⁹ and graduating to a behavior based on death to these and resurrection with Christ to a new heaven-directed motivation (3:1-4). This reasoning is the kind that puts to death earthly sinful practices (3:5), taking them off as an old garment (3:8-9) and replacing them with garments of the risen new man (3:10). Love-oriented conduct results. Paul invites concentration on true spiritual secrets hidden in Christ to nullify a heretical bid to appease false deities through ascetic practices.⁷⁰ His use of *phroneite* in 3:2 summons the Colossians to let their thoughts dwell on that higher realm where the resurrected Christ sits enthroned. The verb imparts motivation based on a self-concept derived from their faith-union with Christ in his death and resurrection (cf. 2:10-13).⁷¹

Slightly later in his imprisonment⁷² Paul employed this paradox in writing to the Philippians. His personal quest to know Christ better aimed toward an experiential knowledge of the power of his resurrection and a conformity to his death (Phil 3:10-11).⁷³ This was the solution to the futility of his former efforts in Judaism, successful by human standards (3:4-6) but unfruitful in bringing ultimate satisfaction and acceptance with God (3:7-8). The Philippian church was encountering a Judaizing heresy very simi-

⁶⁶ Bruce, *Ephesians* 357. See also Bornkamm, *Experience* 71; G. Strecker, "Indicative and Imperative according to Paul," *AusBR* 35 (1987) 60-72; M. Parsons, "Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing," *EvQ* 88/2 (1988) 99-127; R. P. Martin, *Word Biblical Themes* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 118-119. Hoekema's explanation of Eph 4:22-24 leaves much to be desired because he reads the infinitive as statements of facts rather than commands to be obeyed (cf. A. A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986] 26-27) and thus ignores the tension that faces Christians.

⁶⁷ G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 524-525. Ferguson, "Reformed View" 66-67, in essence concurs that this dualistic approach is the correct self-concept: "The truth of the matter is that now as a Christian I must see myself from two perspectives and say two contrasting things about my life: in myself there dwells no good thing by my own creation or nature (Rom 7:18); and in Christ I have been cleansed, justified and sanctified so that in me glorification has begun (1 Cor 6:11)."

⁶⁸ In the captivity epistles, verbs denoting a share in Christ's resurrected life are in the past tense, whereas those in his other writings are usually future (e.g. Rom 6:8). Paul considers a Christian's enjoyment of Christ's new life something that belongs to the here and now (C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977] 124). See also Moule, "The New Life" 482, 484.

⁶⁹ P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco: Word, 1982) 148-149.

⁷⁰ R. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 100.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 95, 101; O'Brien, *Colossians* 118-121.

⁷² Paul's release from prison appears to have been imminent when he wrote Phil 1:25-26. The exchange of reports and messengers between Rome and Philippi after Paul reached Rome must have taken a good bit of time (Silva, *Philippians* 4-5). The writing of Philippians must therefore have followed that of the other three prison epistles by a significant interval.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 189-191.

lar to that in Galatia,⁷⁴ so Paul used his own self-concept to illustrate the right motivation (cf. *phronōmen*, 3:15).⁷⁵

3. *Peter and self-concept.* Several Petrine allusions to the death-life antinomy must conclude this rapid survey. As stated by Peter, the goal of Christ's example in bearing our sins in his body on the tree was "that we being dead to sins might live to righteousness" (1 Pet 2:24). Christians died to sins; they no longer live that way. Their shared-resurrection lives should be characterized by righteousness.⁷⁶ The sins in view are those of insubordination, because the larger context of 2:13-3:6 develops the obligation of submission. Compliance with this standard depends on a consciousness of the believer's participation in Christ's death and resurrection.

The paradox recurs in 4:1-6. Verse 1 concludes: "The one who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Identification of this person is problematic. It cannot be a proverbial description of any person, because the tenses of the verbs are not adapted to a general aphorism⁷⁷ and because human suffering does not always purify.⁷⁸ Neither can the words refer to an imitation of Christ in bearing brutal physical maltreatment, because suffering is insufficient to remove sin, even from the life of a Christian.⁷⁹ *Pathōn* ("suffering") must mean the suffering of death since *pathontos* earlier in v. 1 refers to Christ's death (cf. also 3:18).⁸⁰ The identification of "the one who has suffered in the flesh" as Christ is also unconvincing, because the sinless one (cf. 2:22) could not cease from sinful acts.⁸¹

The remaining alternative is to identify the person as the believer who has been identified positionally with Christ in his death to sin. Objections to finding in this passage a reference to the concept of Rom 6:3-11 are plentiful,⁸² but the connection of the words with 1 Pet 3:18-22 by the inferential conjunction *oun*⁸³ and the tenses of the verbs in 4:1 argue persuasively for a Pauline sense of Romans 6 as the expression's basis.⁸⁴

⁷⁴ C. Mearns, "The Identity of Paul's Opponents at Philippi," *NTS* 33/2 (1987) 202; Silva, *Philippians* 10. Another opinion is that Paul's opponents at Philippi were a semi-gnostic Christian group of Gentiles who had adopted ritual circumcision in an outrageous and shameful way (K. Grayston, "The Opponents in Philippians 3," *ExpTim* 97/6 [1986] 172).

⁷⁵ Paul's pastoral epistles are omitted from this survey for brevity's sake but could profitably be included in a more detailed survey of self-concept (e.g. 2 Tim 2:11-13).

⁷⁶ P. H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 113.

⁷⁷ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; New York: Harper, 1969) 167. *Pathōn* is aorist and *pepautai* is perfect. They designate an experience in the past with its resultant state.

⁷⁸ E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1958) 209.

⁷⁹ Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 167.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Davids, *First Epistle* 149 n. 9.

⁸¹ J. E. Huther, "The Epistles of Peter and Jude," in *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (ed. H. A. W. Meyer; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1893) 201.

⁸² *Ibid.* 203; Selwyn, *First Epistle* 209; Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 168.

⁸³ Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 168.

⁸⁴ Alford, "First Peter," in *The Greek Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, 1903), 4. 371; E. A. Blum, "1 Peter" (Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12. 244.

Peter's command in the same verse to "arm yourselves with the same mind"—a close parallel to *logizesthe heautous* of Rom 6:11—makes the self-concept of a positional sharing in Christ's death virtually inescapable.⁸⁵ On the basis of such a self-concept, Peter speaks of cessation from sin by Christ's persecuted follower, whose guiding conviction is that a course leading to possible martyrdom results in spiritual life.⁸⁶ This turns him to a life in the will of God rather than in the lusts of the flesh (1 Pet 4:2).

IV. A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM

Our overview of NT self-concept leaves many detailed exegetical questions untouched, but even allowing for differing interpretive options it discloses an unmistakable picture of how a Christian should view himself: by contemplating his death and resurrection with Christ along with the practical outworking thereof. This entails a deactivation of his being in regard to its cravings for sin and an energizing of his inner hunger for righteousness, love and holiness.

1. *Current options.* We have reached a crisis point in our thinking about self. The NT self-concept is a far different emphasis from that in contemporary evangelical circles. Usually one hears the promotion of self-worth as the mandatory ingredient in Christian living. The following comments are typical: "All social, political, economic, religious, and even scientific problems relate to the private and collective need for positive pride, or healthy self-esteem."⁸⁷ "The time has come now, nearly 500 years since the Protestant Reformation, for theologians and Christians in general to pass judgment on . . . what is the ultimate theological question. For the crisis facing the church now is a crisis of theology that centers on the doctrine of the human being."⁸⁸ "I submit that self-esteem is the sterling human value that can cause a theological bridge to be built which will bring together interconnecting theologies that can positively, creatively, preventively attack the world's ills."⁸⁹

In reaction to this evangelical self-love, a counter-movement of "worm theology" has been born and is beginning to thrive. Its emphases are characterized by the following quotations: "Those of us who believe that mankind is fallen have reason to expect that much of what comes between the stimulus and the response will prove to be ugly and twisted."⁹⁰ "The human personality is a reservoir of the most incredible feelings and ideas."⁹¹ "Sinful thoughts, words and deeds flow forth from this darkened

⁸⁵ Rigaux, "Death 'to Sin'" 152-153.

⁸⁶ Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 166.

⁸⁷ Schuller, *Self Esteem* 145.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 33.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 149.

⁹⁰ L. J. Crabb, Jr., *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 99.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 100.

heart automatically and compulsively, as water from a polluted fountain. The human heart is now a reservoir of *unconscious disordered motivation and response*.”⁹² “Unless we understand sin as rooted in unconscious beliefs and motives and figure out how to expose and deal with these deep forces within the personality, the church will continue to promote superficial adjustment.”⁹³

Hoekema tried to strike a balance between these two extremes by advocating a positive self-image because of redemption,⁹⁴ but he based his conclusion on three faulty assumptions: that the old man no longer exists for the Christian, that the Spirit will generally prevail over the flesh in the Christian’s struggle, and that being a new creation in Christ limits the Christian life to the already and excludes the not-yet aspect of it.⁹⁵ Denying the tension that characterizes the challenges of progressive sanctification is tantamount to lowering one’s guard against inner sinful inclinations. Besides these shortcomings, Hoekema failed to incorporate the direct NT instructions about self-concept. For example the major NT verse on this subject, Rom 6:11, is not listed in the Scripture index of his book, *Created in God’s Image*.

I am not to think of how good I am or of how bad I am. Ferguson’s portrayal of how a Christian must view himself approaches a good balance: “In myself there dwells no good thing by my own creation or nature . . . and in Christ I have been cleansed, justified and sanctified so that in me glorification has begun.”⁹⁶ This picture is close to the answer. Yet it misses the point of how we are to view the two parts—that is, as dead and alive with Christ.

I must view my flesh as having died with Christ and my new man as having been raised with him. This is a both/and necessity, not an either/or one. To dwell only on my death with Christ leads to depression and the sin of self-pity. To dwell only on my life with Christ caters to pride and makes me vulnerable to the veiled sinful solicitations of the flesh. A consciousness of both fortifies me to make right moral choices.

2. *Toward a victory over sin.* Many Christians want sincerely to live for God and right but have been given the wrong cognitive foundation for doing so. This has contributed to countless ethical failures. The proper perspective could hardly be clearer. Few NT mandates are more frequent and direct: to think of myself as having died with Christ and having been raised with him, or in other words, a “death-life paradox in Christian

⁹² R. Lovelace, cited by *ibid.* 128.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 129.

⁹⁴ Hoekema, *Created* 106-111.

⁹⁵ Harris, “2 Corinthians,” 10. 353, points out that 2 Cor 5:17 emphasizes the discontinuity between the old and new orders but does not eliminate Paul’s emphasis on the coexistence of the present age and the age to come in his other writings (e.g. 1 Cor 10:11; Gal 1:4). He notes the continuing renewal of the individual who belongs to both ages (Rom 12:2; Eph 3:23; Titus 3:5).

⁹⁶ Ferguson, “Reformed View” 66-67.

self-concept." One might say, I should think how I am not and how Christ is.⁹⁷ I died with him, and he and I live by virtue of his resurrection. This concept weans me away from myself and toward him. We need to recapture this mindset of the NT disciple as the only adequate mental preparation for a consistent⁹⁸ life on the highest ethical plane.⁹⁹

Of course establishing a right mindset, to which this discussion must be limited, is only the beginning of sanctification. An adequate foundation is implemented by sorting out the nature of my personal inclinations. My circumstances, like those who received Christ's instruction, may entail opposition (Matt 10:37-39), suffering (16:24-26), sacrifice of family relations (Luke 14:26), a threat to my personal well-being (14:26), the lure of the world's enticements (17:33), or the difficulty of fruitful service (John 12:24-26). Or, my situation, like Paul's, may lead me into hardships of ministry (2 Cor 4:10), a temptation to witness selfishly (5:14-17), a proclivity to yield to sin (Rom 6:11; 12:1-2), an inclination to yield to peer pressure and be overscrupulous in sharing with others (Gal 2:19-20), the same pattern of behavior as non-Christians (Eph 4:17-24), a mistaken zeal for some man-made system (Col 2:20-22; 3:1-4), or a self-centered pride in my accomplishments (Phil 3:10-11). Or, like Peter's readers, I may chafe under the authority of unfair superiors (1 Pet 2:24) or feel the enticement of former sinful habits (4:1-6).

The starting point for my response to these situations is a contemplation of my old man in the grave with Christ with the consequent inability to react selfishly and my new man alive with the risen Christ with the consequent necessity of choosing the God-honoring path. My inner promptings are very complex, so only an extremely perceptive self-analysis can determine their origin. The crucified me constantly tries to rise from the dead and lead me down one of the old sinful paths. The resurrected me inclines toward serving God and others through acts of Christ-centered love. The analysis is difficult because my flesh tries to imitate the Spirit through camouflaging sin to make it resemble what is good and wholesome.¹⁰⁰ I must, however, apply Biblical standards and identify the right¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Hoekema considered it impossible for a person to have no self-image (*Created* 110 n. 11), as Brownback suggested (P. Brownback, *The Danger of Self-Love* [Chicago: Moody, 1982] 133). What the present study advocates is not no self-image but a self-concept that invariably leads to a contemplation of sharing in the death and life of Christ.

⁹⁸ In most of the passages surveyed in this study, the verb tenses indicate a starting point of the recommended attitude and a tenacity in maintaining that attitude subsequently. For example, in Matt 16:24 the initial adoption of the self-concept is marked by two aorist imperatives, *aparnēsasthō* and *aratō*, and the ongoing subsequent process by the present imperative *akoloutheitō*. In Rom 12:1-2 the initial step is expressed in the aorist infinitive *parastēsai* and the continuation that follows by the present imperatives *syschēmatizesthe* and *morphousthe*.

⁹⁹ Parsons, "Being Precedes Act" 127, describes the dependence of ethics on Christ's word as follows: "The indicatives . . . demand an application on the part of the recipients of Paul's correspondence: they are a motive force in the apostle's parenthesis: a corrective factor to misbehavior, and a sanction to right living before the Lord."

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bornkamm, *Experience* 82.

¹⁰¹ The difficulty of self-analysis should not be a deterrent to a conscientious effort to identify the good and the bad (cf. 1 Cor 11:28). Suggestions such as that of Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*

and through God's Spirit make the right choice.¹⁰² This is the final stage in the growth cycle of sanctification.

The emphasis of this address differs from our cultural norm. It is not for one moment offered as the last word on the subject at hand but as a challenge. Those of us laboring in the Biblical and theological fields should search out truth for ourselves and not be content with what is handed us by someone whose academic or practical specialization is elsewhere. Ethical excellence will come only through adherence to the precepts of God's Word, which our calling as specialists requires us to try to understand.

94-95, 100-101, that we cannot plumb the depths of our own beings to discern the sinful inclinations without being fooled are misleading and counterproductive. Carried to its logical conclusion, this would discourage all efforts to achieve holiness.

¹⁰² Styler, "Obligation" 186 n. 26, refers to two types of ethical systems: one whose authority is external (heteronomous), and one whose authority is internal (autonomous). He observes that Pauline ethics included both, the separate person of the Holy Spirit being also the indweller through whom the Christian shares the life of Christ.