

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

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BRUCE McCORMACK • OLIVER O'DONOVAN

SANCTIFICATION



EXPLORATIONS IN THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE



EDITED BY

KELLY M. KAPIC

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To

Tabitha Kapic,

Susan Hardman Moore,

Elizabeth Patterson,

Dayle Seneff

and

Lynn Hall

*Each of you has, in various ways, had a profound impact on my life,
especially through your own particular experiences of faith amid
diverse struggles. In both strong and subtle ways, each of
you has pointed me to the promises and call
of sanctification in Christ by his Spirit.
I remain deeply in your debt.*

CONTENTS

Introduction	9
Abbreviations	17
Contributors	19
PRELUDE: AN OPENING HOMILY	
1. Holiness: Restoring God’s Image	25
Colossians 3:5-17	
<i>Derek Tidball</i>	
PART ONE: SANCTIFIED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN UNION WITH CHRIST	
2. Living by Faith—Alone?	35
Reformed Responses to Antinomianism	
<i>Richard Lints</i>	
3. Sanctification by Faith?	57
<i>Henri Blocher</i>	
4. Covenantal Union and Communion	79
Union with Christ as the Covenant of Grace	
<i>Brannon Ellis</i>	
5. Sanctification After Metaphysics	103
Karl Barth in Conversation with John Wesley’s Conception of “Christian Perfection”	
<i>Bruce L. McCormack</i>	
PART TWO: HUMAN AGENCY AND SANCTIFICATION’S RELATIONSHIP TO ETHICS	
6. “Let the Earth Bring Forth . . .”	127
The Spirit and Human Agency in Sanctification	
<i>Michael Horton</i>	

7. Sanctification and Ethics	150
<i>Oliver O'Donovan</i>	
8. On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics	167
<i>James Eglinton</i>	
PART THREE: THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL MEDITATIONS ON SANCTIFICATION	
9. Gospel Holiness	189
Some Dogmatic Reflections	
<i>Ivor J. Davidson</i>	
10. Faith, Hope and Love	212
A Theological Meditation on Suffering and Sanctification	
<i>Kelly M. Kapic</i>	
11. Sonship, Identity and Transformation	232
<i>Julie Canlis</i>	
12. Sanctification Through Preaching	251
How John Chrysostom Preached for Personal Transformation	
<i>Peter Moore</i>	
Subject and Name Index	269
Scripture Index	273
Praise for <i>Sanctification</i>	276
About the Author	278
More Titles from InterVarsity Press	279
Textbook Selector	280

INTRODUCTION

While there is nothing new under the sun, different seasons do make us sensitive to changes in our environment. When winter dawns our attention turns to jackets, scarves and gloves; when spring arrives the renewed warmth of the sun beckons us outside. On cue, the seasons come and go and we would be foolish to treat them all the same. Each needs our attentiveness in due course, as each has a particular power over our lives and calls for us to respond accordingly.

Similarly, the church often lives through different doctrinal seasons. With the faith, we embrace the truth of God in all its varied theological realities, but inevitably there are periods when one truth requires our renewed consideration. At times we discover we have neglected or distorted a biblical truth, and the result is similar to realizing you are trying to live through winter in your shorts and T-shirt. Sure, it can be done, but it is certainly not a healthy way to exist.

In recent decades debates about justification have dominated the attention of many Protestants. While at times the cool winds of that season can still blow with great power, there are indications that a new season, with new challenges, is at hand. Evangelicals in particular demonstrate strong signs of a growing need to revisit the topic of sanctification. Fresh concern about this vital theological locus is surfacing, which is wonderful since this is where the church so often lives and breathes.

Set free from the dominion of sin, “saints” are set apart for kingdom purposes: as God is holy, so he has called his people holy and promises to renew them in the image of his Son. In a way this is a simple idea. Yet, as will become apparent in the essays that follow, the topic of sanctification is

profoundly intertwined with all manner of other topics, beyond simply its contested relationship to justification. Although justification remains a key idea that can never be left behind, one must also learn to appreciate how sanctification relates to ethics, union with Christ, ecclesiology, adoption, eschatology and so on.

Evangelicalism appears to be in a season of struggling with how best to think about sanctification. What is the relationship between “faith” and human responsibility? How might human agency relate not only to questions of God’s saving grace but also to the way he sustains and preserves us by his grace? Does effort undermine the role of faith? How does all of this relate to our creaturely existence as it is fundamentally empowered by the Spirit? How do we understand the promises of God as we live in the eschatological tension of the now and the not yet?

At the more popular level we see mistrust and misunderstanding perpetuated. For some, the temptation is to reduce the gospel to moral improvement, while for others, human effort appears irrelevant—if not downright antithetical—to the Christian life. On the one hand, a number of prominent voices have emphatically focused their message on the “gospel,” by which some tend to mean narrowly “justification by faith alone.” Such voices have at times appeared to provide balm to wounded souls; too many have labored under the suffocating weight of certain forms of rigid fundamentalism that reduced the gospel to a list of oppressive rules. To be told over and over of God’s unflinching love and grace, of your secure position as declared righteous because of Christ’s righteousness, can be both liberating and invigorating to such anguished listeners.

On the other hand, some raise the concern that such a perspective, if left undeveloped, might actually risk perverting grace rather than fully proclaiming it. They worry that if in the process of declaring the “good news” we end up belittling the significance of human will and agency, we are not ultimately liberating people; we might be undermining the fullness of gospel *life*. Not only is the believer set free *from* the condemning power of sin, but they are also set free *to* love and serve others, *to* grow and *to* flourish under God’s care. A growing multitude echoes this renewed emphasis on personal piety, holiness and justice concerns even as it has welcomed renewed exploration on the topic of human agency.

While many of the representative voices on both sides of this come from the Reformed tradition, this conversation is being engaged in by a much larger audience, including many across the spectrum of evangelicalism.

Unfortunately, much of the current conversation is only taking place at the more popular level. In this book, we offer something a bit different. It is not intended as a direct engagement with those particular popular authors, but rather provides some “outside” perspective from theologians who are nevertheless also deeply concerned with the Protestant doctrine of sanctification (and justification!). Representing a good portion of the breadth of the Reformed tradition, these scholars gathered in Edinburgh a number of years ago to offer extended reflections on sanctification. Most of the essays in this book grew out of that Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference.

No attempt has been made to provide a unified perspective on sanctification here—we are not presenting some new school of thought or anything like that, as some of the subtle disagreements even within this volume indicate. Instead, this is an opportunity to explore the doctrine of sanctification; offer various proposals that might stimulate further thought and discussion; and also hopefully encourage pastoral reflection that is biblically, theologically and historically informed. It is our great hope that these essays by ecclesial-minded scholars might stimulate and foster this growing discussion.

Beginning and ending with ecclesial concerns, this volume opens with a homily and closes with theological and pastoral meditations: we aim to place this discussion squarely within the life of the church, even if at times it can appear somewhat technical or philosophical. The following brief reviews of the essays in this volume aim to give potential readers a survey of the work, hopefully orienting them to some of the directions in which the discussion will move.

Derek Tidball’s homily on holiness as the restoration of God’s image combines careful exegesis with pastoral wisdom. Using Colossians 3:5-17 as a lens for understanding what it means for a believer to be holy, he proposes that the meaning of holiness in this passage is threefold: to have a Christlike character, to have a Christ-renewed mind and to belong to a Christ-renewed community. Holiness is relational because the church is the place where a new *habitus* is cultivated, where the image of God is restored.

Richard Lints opens up the first section by addressing the relationship between sanctification and faith, and how this relationship is similar to and different from justification and faith. Eschewing any simple dichotomy between sanctification and justification, Lints suggests that faith is just as operative in sanctification as it is in justification: both are “exterior”; that is, sanctification is just as much dependent on divine grace as justification. In this way, the law in sanctification functions sapientially for the believer, rather than judicially. Sanctification is not primarily about moral progress but about the Spirit’s restoration of human desires and worship.

Although Henri Blocher’s essay has close affinities to Lints’s, Blocher advances the discussion by providing nuanced definitions and a fresh discussion of law and obedience, as well as carefully navigating the relationship between faith and human agency. After providing a sound introduction to sanctification’s key motifs and to the basic questions surrounding the relationship between justification, sanctification and faith, Blocher argues that sanctification is by faith because sanctification occurs in Christ and requires the renewed believer continually to adhere to a person outside of herself. But sanctification by faith is different from justification by faith in that sanctification is progressive and incremental, involving work and response. The works involved, however, are not “meritorious” in any sense, for Blocher maintains the monergistic givenness of holiness by the Spirit in sanctification, just as in justification.

Brannon Ellis hopes to enrich conversations between sanctification and justification by considering the place of union with Christ in sanctification, especially in terms of the communion of the saints. Ellis argues that to be made new by Christ is inextricably bound to being “in” Christ, which in turn is inextricably bound to belonging to the church. In doing this, he does not collapse soteriology and ecclesiology into one another, but emphasizes the inseparability of the new covenant membership with the mystical union. In this respect, rather than seeing union with Christ as holding a particular place on the *ordo salutis*, it spans the *ordo*’s outworking of redemption from beginning to end.

Bruce McCormack’s essay is historically centered, comparing the theologies of John Wesley and Karl Barth and exploring their respective contributions to the doctrine of sanctification. At first glance this might look like an

odd pairing, but McCormack insightfully shows how Barth's notion of sanctification, though it differs philosophically from Wesley's, is not far from Wesley in that they both affirm the possibility—indeed, the actuality—of Christian perfection now. For Barth, of course, this Christian perfection is different from Wesley's in that Barth argues that perfection is not possible within a person *herself*, but it is found in Jesus Christ. Sanctification on this conception highlights not so much personal, private piety but communal participation in the life-ministry of Jesus.

Michael Horton's essay, which begins part two, is a helpful prolegomenon to addressing the role of agency and ethics in sanctification. Specifically, he explains just how sanctification *works*, given the real activity of both God and humans. Rejecting both theological determinism and theological openness, Horton suggests that God sanctifies humans by acting on, with and within creaturely reality. This "cooperation" rests on the analogical assumption that God and humans act in a single event without disrupting the other's free action.

In "Sanctification and Ethics," Oliver O'Donovan offers a fresh framework for interpreting the practical meaning of sanctification. Arguing that the usual terms employed in the sanctification conversation are reductive and overly binary, O'Donovan challenges the reader to see sanctification as it unfolds from the threefold chord of faith, love and hope, in that order. Significantly, O'Donovan argues that sanctification is only incremental in that it involves the acquisition of practical wisdom. The wisdom of love and faith, though, is insufficient unless it is "led out" by hope into vocation and ethics, which clings to the promises of God and anticipates the resurrection life that is to come.

James Eglinton also considers sanctification as it relates to ethics, but with a historical bent toward Herman Bavinck's theology of sanctification. By exploring Bavinck's thought, Eglinton delves into a rich historical proposal that illumines a way forward for understanding the intricate relationship between dogmatics and ethics. With regard to sanctification, Eglinton musters Bavinck's insights to suggest that whereas justification consists of an objective declaration, sanctification consists of *both* an objective declaration of holiness and a subjective process of becoming more holy.

In order to liberate the Christian conception of holiness from misrepresentations that present it as stifling and life-denying on the one hand or

over-realized on the other, Ivor Davidson ably starts off part three by providing a dogmatic account of how the theological foundations of this doctrine should inform our lives. This task leads him to reconsider the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness in the Bible, which culminates in Christ's life, and in contemporaneous Christian praxis. God, *in se*, is wholly other and, as such, is qualitatively unique and incomparably holy. This holiness, as exemplified in the life of Christ, often confounds us: it exhibits an intense jealousy for sinners and concomitant concern for sinful creatures. And because of the definitiveness of Christ's holiness, Davidson argues that believers are, in a very real sense, holy *now*. Christian participation in his holiness imitates the cruciformity of Jesus through enacting a life-activity of repentance and faith.

I, Kelly Kapic, offer some reflections on the relationship between physical suffering and sanctification. Employing the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, I argue for the importance of the community during times of suffering and struggle. Drawing on the likes of Kierkegaard and Luther, for example, I suggest that we should view our Christian life, especially during times of great difficulty, in much more communal ways. Put simply, when we are having trouble believing, our sisters and brothers in Christ believe for us—thus representing us to God; when we find it almost impossible to have hope, fellow saints bring us the fresh waters of promise in a way we can drink of them—thus representing God to us; finally, such faith and hope requires a context of love, otherwise the call to faith can become insensitive and the appeal to hope abusive. But in the context of love, the people of God grow in grace and truth as they sustain one another in faith and hope. In a brief conclusion, I raise three theological images as correspondents to these truths: cross, resurrection and feast—each of them provides the rich background for how we experience and understand faith, hope and love.

Like Ellis in his essay, Julie Canlis offers an incisive reflection on union with Christ and its connection to sanctification. Aiming to provide a creative and fertile discussion without getting bogged down by what she sees as recent unhelpful infighting about this doctrine, she argues that union with Christ was meant to ensure adoption and to unify the ecclesial community. Far from being a substantial infusion of grace or a purely legal transaction, adoptive union is made real by receiving the *person* of Jesus, not just

his mere benefits, and this is always through the *person* of the Holy Spirit. In this thoroughly interpersonal affair, the Spirit is the one who makes us daughters and sons and empowers us to live out our sonship in meaningful action.

Peter Moore's essay, "Sanctification Through Preaching," looks to the pedagogical method of John Chrysostom to offer wisdom for contemporaries in pastoral leadership who are concerned with the sanctification of their people. Confronting traditional notions of education and transformation as merely the transfer of ideas, Moore shows how Chrysostom emphasized the sanctifying effect of encountering another disciple and being transformed by his *gnōmē* (γνώμη), that is, his "chosen life trajectory." Accordingly, he argues that sanctification often occurs as the believer lives with and inevitably starts to follow a Christian mentor, since that embodied guide points them to the good life of communion with God.

Many should be thanked for helping make this volume possible, but only a relatively few can be mentioned here. First and foremost, it is only by the generosity of Rutherford House and under the leadership of Andrew McGowan that this work exists. Second, I have been greatly assisted by two former students of mine: Grady Dickinson at the start of the editorial process, and even more by Jimmy Myers, who helped me in endless ways to see it to completion. Third, while the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation or Biola's Center for Christian Thought, this publication benefited from a research fellowship at Biola University's Center for Christian Thought, which was made possible through the support of a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. I was able to complete this manuscript while beginning my time at CCT. While there, Dave Strobolakis carefully reviewed the manuscript for me, and Steve Porter, C. Stephen Evans, Thomas Crisp, David Horner, William Struthers, James Wilhoit, Christopher Kaczor, Rachel Dee, Evan Rosa and others provided a fantastic working environment. Fourth, Brannon Ellis, David Congdon and Andy Le Peau, all of whom represented IVP Academic very well, deserve thanks for their productive encouragement, feedback and help. Finally, volumes like this are only as good as the contributors, and I am thankful to those who were so receptive to editorial feedback and took the time to revise their

essays with the hope that they might prove useful to a wider audience. Our great hope and prayer is that readers may find this volume in some ways helpful, drawing them back to consider afresh what it means to be united to Christ, sanctified by his Spirit and drawn into genuine communion with the living God and his people.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CD Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. 4 vols. in 13 parts. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956–1975.
- CO *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*. Edited by Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz and Eduardus Reuss. 59 vols. Corpus Reformatorum 29–87. Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1863–1900.
- ET English translation
- KD Karl Barth. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*. 4 vols. in 13 parts. Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1932; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1938–1965.
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke* [Weimarer Ausgabe]. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1993.

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PRELUDE



An Opening Homily

HOLINESS

Restoring God's Image

Colossians 3:5-17

Derek Tidball

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all

wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

COLOSSIANS 3:5-17 NIV¹



Michelangelo sculpted his exquisite *Pietà*, the statue of Mary nursing her crucified yet serene son, when he was just twenty-four. It was the only sculpture he ever signed. Installed in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, in 1500, the *Pietà* stood there mostly undisturbed² until Laszio Toth, a thirty-three-year-old Hungarian-born Australian, attacked it with a hammer in 1972. Toth's onslaught resulted in severe damage to the nose, left eye and veil of Mary as well as leaving her left arm shattered. Onlookers reportedly took some of these shattered pieces away as souvenirs. The masterpiece of Renaissance art was now a damaged masterpiece in need of restoration. Over succeeding months the sculpture was painstakingly repaired by taking a block of marble from its back, where the hole left behind would not be seen, and restoring the *Pietà* to its original image.

Holiness may be defined in many ways. The heart of holiness lies in the restoration of God's image in us. As with the *Pietà*, an enemy has entered our world and attacked human beings, who were made in the image of God (Gen 1:27), leaving us damaged and lacking. We are spoiled masterpieces. The enemy's attack is not the whole story explaining our fall from God's gracious intention at creation. Like any statue, we pick up the grime of life, and the pollution of our fallen world takes its toll. Unlike a lifeless statue, the defacement of God's image in us is due not only to enemy attack or to the

¹All scripture verses in this chapter are from the NIV 1984.

²It sustained minor damage when being moved in 1736 and was displayed briefly in New York in 1964.

effect of a fallen environment but also to much self-harm, as we choose to live in disobedience to and alienation from God. The cumulative result of the onslaughts of the devil, the world and the flesh is that we are spoiled masterpieces in need of restoration.

Christ is the masterful craftsman who painstakingly sets about the work of restoring God's image in us through his Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:5-17 does not say everything there is to be said about sanctification, but it takes us to the heart of Christ's work of restoration. The Christians in Colossae had a wrong understanding of how God's image could be restored in them. They believed that holiness would develop through the adoption of ascetic practices or through undergoing extraordinary spiritual experiences (Col 2:16-23). But their belief was mistaken because it was based on an insufficient grasp of the work of Christ's sufficiency.

In correcting them Paul explains the meaning of holiness in three dimensions.

HOLINESS IS TO HAVE A CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

Paul provides the Colossians with two lists of characteristics that are incompatible with living a life in Christ. The first starts with actions and leads to attitudes: "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). The second goes in the reverse direction, starting with attitudes and leading to actions: "anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language" (Col 3:8) and lying (Col 3:9). These attitudes and actions, he said, were to be "put to death" (Col 3:5) as surely as a crucified man was put to death, and got rid of (Col 3:8) as surely as last week's rubbish is removed by the trash collectors.

He gives several reasons why we take such decisive action, including the avoidance of the "wrath of God" that is coming (Col 3:6). But the deeper reason is not a pragmatic one—in order to avoid punishment—but a more worthy one. We divest ourselves of these qualities because they are incompatible with our identity as Christians. Using language that by common consent picks up the image of baptism, where candidates would disrobe to be baptized and clothe themselves in new garments after emerging from the water, Paul reminds them that in becoming followers of Christ, they have "taken off [the] old self with its practices and have put on the new self, *which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator*" (Col 3:9-10).

In perhaps more contemporary terms it is a question of whose uniform we are wearing. Uniforms display not only what we are called to do but also to whom we belong and whose management we are under. Are we wearing the old and shabby uniform of Adam or the renewed designer clothes of Christ? The context suggests that the “self” spoken of here refers not so much to the personal, inner, motivating power of sin as to our corporate identity. As Douglas Moo explains, “The contrast of the ‘old self’ and ‘new self’ alludes to one of Paul’s most fundamental theological conceptions: the contrast between a realm in opposition to God, rooted in Adam’s sin and characterized by sin and death, and the new realm, rooted in Christ’s death and resurrection and characterized by righteousness of life.”³ The corporate dimension surfaces clearly in verse 11, and is a crucial, if neglected, dimension of the meaning of holiness.

The “putting off” of the old uniform in verses 5-9 is balanced by the “putting on” of verses 12-17. Holiness does not consist of stopping bad behavior and eschewing sinful attitudes alone but of replacing them with good behavior and pursuing Christlike attitudes. Years ago, Michael Griffiths warned that “there is a kind of Christian negative holiness which rejoices in discarding various forms of worldliness, but which leaves the individual stark naked.”⁴ Paul would have us clothed “with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col 3:12). Then he calls us to “put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col 3:14). These are characteristics that describe Jesus Christ perfectly. We all know of Christians who believe themselves to be holy because they avoid certain things, but they are inhibited people, often pharisaical in disposition, who, as Mark Twain said, are “good in the worst sense of the word.” Holiness is more than avoiding sin. It is cultivating the character of Christ in us.

Although the “self” spoken of here is corporate, the implications are personal and individual. We are each called to work out the reality of our transfer to the new realm of being under Christ. The difficulty we face is that the old realm still exists. Since it has not yet been destroyed it still has some attraction for us. So working out our new position is often a struggle, but in

³Douglas Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 268.

⁴Michael Griffiths, *Cinderella with Amnesia* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 78.

the gradual transformation of our characters into Christlikeness we see the new realm dawning and advancing toward its fullness.

To help us understand further, Paul focuses on the role that our minds play in this.

HOLINESS IS TO HAVE A CHRIST-RENEWED MIND

On this occasion Paul does not say that we are being renewed in the image of our Creator but that we are being “renewed *in knowledge* in the image of [our] Creator” (Col 3:10). Why does he insert the words “in knowledge,” which seem to interrupt what might be the more natural flow of his words?

The account of the fall in Genesis 2:17 draws attention to the importance of the mind in causing humanity’s downfall; consequently, it is vital that that which played such a crucial role in causing the problem should be addressed in the giving of the solution. Adam and Eve were told by God, “You must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:17). While it is difficult to unpack the meaning of the tree’s mysterious title in full, it is evident that this was a tree that would provide Adam and Eve with knowledge beyond what was good for them as human beings. Its fruit would lead them to know everything as God knows it and so to become independent from their Creator, dispensing with the need for him, and leading them to live autonomous and self-sufficient lives.

The mind in Hebrew thought was not so much about abstract intellectual or philosophical thought, as in the Greek world, but about practical wisdom. So we must be careful not to apply this life of the mind simply to the importance of correct theological discussion, much beloved in academia. That may miss the point. The way we think shapes the way we live and governs what we do. As Proverbs 4:23 puts it: “Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts” (TEV). This is as true of young rioters as of aid workers, of middle-class materialists as of selfless monks, of school dropouts as of university professors. All need their minds renewed in Christ. It is about thinking correctly, as God would have us think, so that we might live correctly. As Paul expressed it in the parallel text in Ephesians 4:22-24, “You were taught . . . to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Paul tells us that such a renewal is going to be a *progressive work of God*.

He uses the passive continuous tense: “which *is being* renewed.” Paul is not intent here on encouraging passivity, which leaves the work of transformation wholly up to God and treats the believer as if he or she were an anaesthetized body, undergoing an operation by a divine surgeon. There are plenty of active commands in the context to prevent us from falling into that error (although we may want to debate exactly how the divine and human interact). His point is rather that the renewal of the mind, and so of God’s image in us, is a process: it does not take place in an instant, nor has it taken place fully yet. When the allied forces withdrew from Iraq and returned the country to the new regime in Baghdad, they wrote what was called “a script for reconstruction.” Believers, having withdrawn from being under Adam’s regime and now serving under Christ’s lordship, are engaged by the grace of God and in the power of his Spirit in enacting a script for reconstruction throughout their lives. Peter O’Brien speaks of it as “the believers’ progressive ability to recognize God’s will and command” and to live in accordance with it.⁵

If it is progressive and we have an active part in it, it means we must work out our new identity daily, learning new habits, adopting new disciplines, practicing the steps that will enable us to become the persons God intended us to be, manifesting his image in the world. The transformation of character does not just happen. It happens, as Tom Wright has recently pointed out, partly in the same way we learn anything, by adopting those steps that help us get to our goal and practicing them until they “become habitual, a matter of second nature.”⁶

If holiness is progressive, it is also *purposeful*. The goal is not that we should just become better people, nicer neighbors (although that should be a byproduct) and certainly not necessarily more astute or pedantic theologians, but that we should be renewed “in the image of the Creator.”

In Colossians, such a phrase drives us back to the “hymn” in Colossians 1:15, which celebrates the Son as “the image of the invisible God” and the one in whom, through whom and for whom all things were created. So the goal is to become Christlike. In the words of C. F. D. Moule, re-creation “is *in the*

⁵Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary 44 (Waco: Word, 1982), p. 192.

⁶Tom Wright, *Virtue Reborn* (London: SPCK, 2010), p. 27.

pattern of Christ, who is God's Likeness absolutely.⁷⁷ This is none other than the ancient call to "be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2), updated by the new covenant, which gives us the advantage of seeing what it means to be perfectly holy, what the unblemished image of God looks like in a human being, and so what it means to be truly human, modeled by the person of Christ.

To be holy is to have the image of God, given to us at creation, restored in us. It is, therefore, to be truly human and truly Christlike.

HOLINESS IS TO BELONG TO A CHRIST-TRANSFORMED COMMUNITY

The whole thrust of Paul's writing in Colossians 3 prevents us from taking holiness as limited to personal ethics or individual character. It is about living in the new community. Again this is the new covenant outworking of God's unchanging desire to have people of his own, evident first in the Garden of Eden, but then advanced through the call of Abraham and in the calling of Israel. So holiness is relational, and no one can claim to be holy if they are isolated or insulated from others who name Christ as Lord. Isolationist Christians are a contradiction to what it means to be in Christ. Holiness is about belonging to a holy people (Ex 19:5; 1 Pet 2:9).

In Colossians 3:11-17 Paul expresses the nature of a Christ-transformed community, first negatively and then positively.

Negatively it is clear that the old identity markers that discriminated between people in the conventional world—that is, the world of Adam, of the old self—no longer have currency. They are like an ancient, defunct currency that no longer has any trading value. Four such boundaries are mentioned. They are ethnic ("no Greek or Jew"), ritual ("circumcised or uncircumcised"), cultural ("barbarian, Scythian") and social ("slave or free").⁸ A church where such distinctions matter has not understood holiness. An individual who is racist, who judges people by their religious rituals, or is a social snob, or for that matter, one who is sexist, has not begun to understand the meaning of holiness.

⁷⁷C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 120.

⁸On the choice of these boundary markers and the difference between this list and that in Gal 3:28, see Derek Tidball, *In Christ, in Colossae: Sociological Perspectives on Colossians* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), pp. 58-60.

By contrast, *positively*, the only thing that matters is that “Christ is all and is in all.” Consequently, if holiness is living in his image, we relate to one another as he related to others. That means

- the character of Christ will shape us (Col 3:12-14): “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,” bearing with one another and forgiving as he forgave us;
- the peace of Christ will rule between us (Col 3:15): causing us to settle disputes and arguments and working for unity;
- the word of Christ will dwell in us (Col 3:16): so that all we do will seek to be consistent with his message; and
- the honor of the name of Christ will determine our behavior (Col 3:17) in every dimension of our lives.

For many Christians this corporate dimension is the missing dimension of holiness. I know many who would never dream of getting drunk or committing adultery, and rightly so, yet have no conscience about having a row in church or speaking in a racist way or espousing other socially divisive attitudes.

Holiness is wider than we think! Holiness is about

- our separation from sin;
- our devotion to Christ;
- our adoption of godly habits; and
- our identification with Christ in practice.

But holiness is also about

- the individual and relational dimensions of our lives;
- the detailed and specific as well as the general and comprehensive aspects of our living;
- our doing and our being;
- our thinking and our acting; and
- our being passively transformed and actively obedient.

Holiness is the painstaking restoration, by the most skilled craftsman of all, of ruined masterpieces in the image of their creator.

Praise for *Sanctification*

“Having chaired the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference at which most of these papers were given in preliminary form, it is a delight to see them reworked and in print. We owe a debt of gratitude to Kelly Kacic for his willingness to edit the papers and to bring them through to this fine conclusion. The subject of sanctification is vital for the life of the church, as well as being an important topic of theological discussion, and so this volume sits at the intersection between church and academy. This is precisely what the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, organized by Rutherford House, seeks to achieve in bringing together scholars and pastors every second year.”

A. T. B. McGowan, chairman, Rutherford House Trustees

“This timely collection of essays turns attention to a topic too often neglected in contemporary theological discussion—the doctrine of sanctification. These insightful, nuanced and mutually engaging (and at times mutually challenging) studies by scholars within the Reformed tradition speak to the ecumenical church and remind us that to disregard this doctrine is to misunderstand the nature of justification itself. They call us back to the fact that Holy Scripture speaks powerfully not only of forgiveness but of holiness, and that the Christian life can never be rightly understood when either is overlooked.”

Kimlyn J. Bender, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

“Few doctrines today are as unwieldy and ill-defined as sanctification. Vast terrain must be charted and a path forward must be suggested that honors the wide variety of biblical teachings that impinge on the subject. Kelly Kacic has done us all a great service in gathering these essays that explore the terrain and map out proposals regarding evangelical holiness. On a number of key issues, ranging from *sola fide* or perfection to union with Christ or suffering, this book draws wisely from the tradition, engages patiently with the scriptural testimony, and tries to think clearly and compellingly for the church today. I commend it.”

Michael Allen, Kennedy Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Knox Theological Seminary

“Reading these essays brings rich blessing. While these scholars offer the kinds of insight one would expect from each, still the insights themselves can be surprisingly rich. Amid contemporary Reformed confusion and conflict, this collection helpfully places sanctification in biblical, historical and pastoral perspective—thus making truly ecumenical and evangelical contributions.”

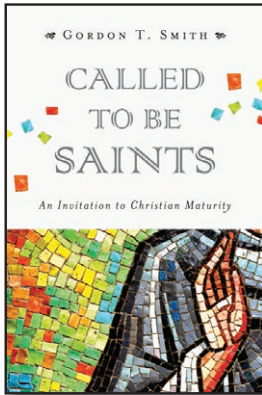
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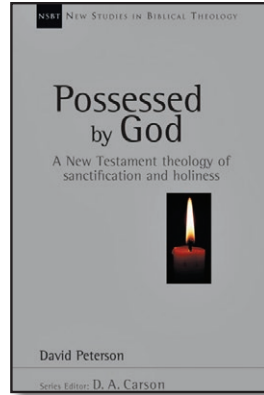


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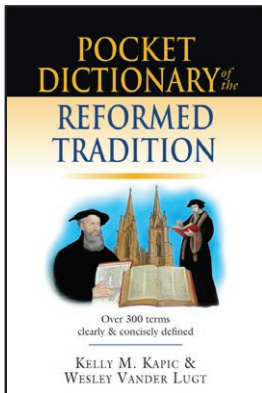
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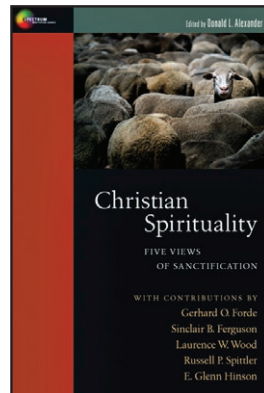
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