

In *Five Views on Sanctification*, Gundry attempts to establish the similarities and make clear the distinctions in the theological views on sanctification held by five schools of thought. He does this by bringing together essays by leading scholars, along with their brief comments on each other's views. Dieter represents the Wesleyan perspective, Hoekema the Reformed Presbyterian, Horton the Pentecostal, McQuilkin the Keswick, and Walvoord the Dispensational.

There is a surprising amount of agreement. Gundry emphasizes this on the first page of his forward, mentioning the following: the past [positional], present [progressive], and future [glorifying] aspect of sanctification; the need for believers to strive to express God's love, devote themselves to disciplines, and make choices of obedience; and God's promise to bring success in the struggle against sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹ I would elaborate by adding the following similarities from all the essays: what it means to be sanctified²; the continued problem of sin throughout life³; the need for a deep commitment by the believer⁴; the integral nature of God's actions, including regeneration, sanctifying grace, the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and the renewing power of the scriptures⁵; the integral nature of believer's actions, including acting in faith [including appropriating God's promises and what Christ has accomplished], submission to the Holy Spirit, submission to Christ's lordship, and the specific discipline of submersing oneself in God's Word⁶; and the result of Christ-likeness [though they stress different aspects of that likeness].⁷ At least four essays referred to the process of sanctification as the purpose of our salvation: God wants to generate for himself a holy people.⁸

Most of the contrasts that divide us are small, a matter of stress. For example, the Wesleyan school summarizes sanctification in terms of generating love in us,⁹ while the Reformed school stresses dedication and obedience¹⁰; the Wesleyan school discusses the likely need for a "second crisis" of entire consecration,¹¹ while the Reformed school teaches to be committed from the start to continual renewal.¹² Some major differences exist, such as

¹ p.7

² pp.30 [Wesleyan], 62 [Reformed], 112 [Pentecostal], 158 [Keswick], and 56 [Dispensational].

³ pp.17 [Wesleyan], 75-76 [Reformed], 134 [Pentecostal], 157 [Keswick], and 203 [Dispensational].

⁴ pp.137, 185 [Wesleyan], 187 [Reformed], 112 [Pentecostal], 171 [Keswick], and 57 [Dispensational].

⁵ pp. 20-21, 28, 34 [Wesleyan], 64-65, 76-77 [Reformed], 117-122, 127-128 [Pentecostal], 154-155, 166, 174-175, 181-182 [Keswick], and 194-195, 209, 214-215 [Dispensational].

⁶ pp.21, 27, 32-35 [Wesleyan], 67-68, 70, 77, 82 [Reformed], 51, 107, 114, 191 [Pentecostal], 155, 163-164, 176 [Keswick], and 57, 146, 194-195, 209, 215-218, 225 [Dispensational].

⁷ pp.18, 27, 34 [Wesleyan], 66, 77, 89 [Reformed], 96, 119-126 [Pentecostal], 154, 161-162, 169-170, 176-178 [Keswick], and 220-222 [Dispensational].

⁸ pp.15-16, 20, 27 [Wesleyan], 47-48, 62, 67 [Reformed], 96, 120, 132 [Pentecostal], and 214 [Dispensational].

⁹ pp.18, 27, 138.

¹⁰ pp.47-48, 61-63.

¹¹ pp.18, 185-186.

¹² p.83.

how victorious we can expect to get in our walk¹³ or whether there is a baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation,¹⁴ but overall the similarities outweigh the contrasts.

While the book is valuable in that it reveals the many theological agreements and the few distinctions about sanctification across schools of thought, it falls short of leaving the reader with the ability to make clear conclusions without an extensive combination of extra study, thought, and working with notes from the text.

The structure of the book – individual essays each written by a representative theologian, with brief comments on each other’s essays – allows for full expression of what each theologian thinks is important, but results in widely divergent themes and dogmatic tangents.¹⁵ Two ideas that might have helped are to provide a summarizing chart at the end of the book to compare the views on certain essential questions, and providing such questions to the theologians to answer prior to their embarkation on the writing exercise.

Another problem with the book is that the theologians are vague on some of the more important aspects of sanctification. For example, while each essay discusses elements necessary for progressive [or experiential] sanctification, none of them makes clear how this takes place; the resulting impression is of “black box” for which we know the input and output, but not the process. Also, none of the authors are clear on what being “transformed” means: do we change in an essential way to be more like Christ, is it some aspect of ourselves that changes [e.g. our “nature,” our “mind,” or our “soul”], is it just a matter of realizing that gratitude and its consequent changes in behavior is in our own selfish best interest, or what?

Perhaps related to that issue is the problem that the theologians were inconsistent about clearly defining their terms and tended to use the same terms in different ways than others. Thus it is not clear to the reader – and perhaps not to the theologians – exactly what the relationship is between progressive [or experiential] sanctification, spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, spirituality, and being Spirit-filled; there is confusion of fruit of the Spirit with fruit of sanctification; there is confusion about the “old nature” vs. the “new nature” and the “old man” vs. the “new man.” I would say Walvoord was the best at stating these definitions and relationships clearly and biblically, but I was disappointed in his essay for the other issues just mentioned. His essay is essentially a rehashing of his work revising Chafer’s *Major Bible Themes*,¹⁶ and less clear than was that text.

In conclusion, while this book is worth reading as a part of the study of sanctification, it is not sufficient to bring the reader to a clear understanding.

¹³ See, for example, pp.14, 17-18 [Wesleyan], 73-74, 82 [Reformed], 121-124, 135 [Pentecostal], 53-55, 153-159, [Keswick], and 194, 203, 208-209 [Dispensational].

¹⁴ See, for example, 138 [Wesleyan], 140-141 [Reformed], 105, 131-132 [Pentecostal], 144-145 [Keswick], and 146-147, 211 [Dispensational].

¹⁵ A perusal of the subheadings in each chapter proves the variety of emphases across theologians. A good illustration of my point is that Horton invested about six pages [20% of his essay length] to the topic of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, yet maintained it was not part of the sanctification process [51, 132; though his description of it makes it sound as though it is]!

¹⁶ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, rev. ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974).