

Five Views on Sanctification

edited by Stanley N. Gundry

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This volume is one of many in the Zondervan *Counterpoints* series which “provide a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians.” The five views of sanctification which are presented include: (1) the Wesleyan perspective written by Melvin E. Dieter; (2) the Reformed perspective written by Anthony A. Hoekema; (3) the Pentecostal perspective written by Stanley M. Horton; (4) the Keswick perspective written by J. Robertson McQuilkin; and (5) the Augustinian-Dispensational perspective written by John F. Walvoord.

Each perspective is presented in turn. Following the presentation of each of the five perspectives, the other four authors provide responses which critique the perspective just presented. This provides a point-counterpoint dialog which is most helpful in clarifying the essential elements in which each perspective differs from the others. The volume concludes with both a subject index and a scripture index.

Although a main purpose of the book is to clarify the *differences* in which each of the five perspectives understands the Biblical teaching regarding sanctification, it becomes evident during the process that the five views have much more in *common* than one might at first assume. Although differences remain, one finds that many of the secondary disagreements have more to do with how definitions and terminology are used than with incompatible views of what scripture teaches on the topics discussed. The result is a strengthened confidence in what scripture teaches concerning the core issues of sanctification—which all the views recognize.

Among the five views, two of the views stand out as holding perspectives which are markedly different than the rest.

The Wesleyan perspective asserts the possibility of *entire sanctification* also called (misleadingly) *perfection*. This view holds that by means of progressive sanctification, the Christian may reach a point “through the Holy Spirit [where we] are *able not to sin*, even though we never come to the place where we are *not able to sin*” (p. 137). The subtlety in this statement has to do with the Wesleyan separation of sin into conscious willing rebellion to God's law vs. unconscious, unintentional sin. The sin over which victory is said to apply is the conscious willing kind. A significant problem is that this is only one aspect of the full Biblical definition of sin which includes both *intentionally* and *unconsciously* falling short of God's ideal. It seems that entire sanctification can only result in victory over one of these categories--a sort of “partial perfection” which is really no perfection.

Unique to the Pentecostal perspective is the view that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent work after salvation which is not necessarily experienced by all believers. Pentecostalism attaches great significance to this work in the life of the believer and its relationship to progressive sanctification—especially empowerment for evangelism and service. Typically, speaking in tongues is held to be the sign that a believer has undergone

this baptism. In this, the Pentecostal view stands alone—all other views understanding Holy Spirit baptism as that which joins each believer to the body of Christ (1Cor. 12:13) at the time of coming to faith.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book is the historical discussion of the relationship between some of the views. Of particular interest is the development of the Pentecostal and Keswick movements which borrow much from the earlier Wesleyan understanding of sanctification.

Each of the five presenters engages the other views carefully and constructively and with an absence of polemics which is refreshing for a discussion among such diverse points of view.

I would recommend this book to anyone who would benefit from a succinct summary of the Biblical teaching on sanctification and an overview of the divergence of opinion which has characterized evangelical study of this topic.

Review by [Tony Garland](#) of www.SpiritAndTruth.org.