Jae-Eun Park

Driven by God

Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification in the Soteriology of Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper

V&R



© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

in Co-operation with
Emidio Campi, Irene Dingel, Elsie Anne McKee,
Richard Muller, Risto Saarinen, and Carl Trueman

Volume 46

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Jae-Eun Park

Driven by God

Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification in the Soteriology of Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication
in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data
available online: http://dnb.de.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Typesetting: 3w+p, Rimpar
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2197-1137
ISBN 978-3-647-55284-2

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Contents

Preface 11

1. Introduction 13
1.1 Introduction and Thesis Statement 13
1.2 Present Status of the Problem 17
1.2.1 Definitive Sanctification 17
1.2.2 Active Justification 21
1.3 Proposed Method 23
1.4 Outline – A Study in Three Parts 25

Part I: Definitive Sanctification and Active Justification Defined

2. Definitive Sanctification 29
2.1 Clarification of Terms 29
2.2 John Murray's View of Definitive Sanctification 31
2.2.1 Views that Differ from Murray's 31
2.2.2 Definition and Two Main Themes: *Identity* and *Lordship* . . 32
2.2.3 Union with Christ and the Agency of Definitive Sanctification 34
2.2.4 Definitive Sanctification and Progressive Sanctification . . . 36
2.3 Defending the Idea of Definitive Sanctification 38
2.3.1 The Biblical Case for Definitive Sanctification 39
2.3.1.1 Romans 6:1–14 and Definitive Sanctification 40
2.3.1.2 Definitive Sanctification in 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11 . . 43
2.3.2 The Confessional Case for Definitive Sanctification 45
2.3.3 Francis Turretin's Case for Definitive Sanctification 48
2.4 Theological Disagreement 49
2.4.1 Mixing Forensic Justification with Definitive Sanctification . 49
2.4.2 The Placement of Definitive Sanctification in the *Ordo Salutis* 51

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

2.4.2.1 Logical Priority of Justification over Sanctification . . 52
2.4.2.2 The *Ordo Salutis* and Definitive Sanctification 54
2.4.2.3 Does Definitive Sanctification Represent a Distinct and Independent Point within the *Ordo Salutis?* . . . 55
2.4.3 Lessons from Theological Debates 58
2.4.4 Definitive Sanctification and Faith 59
2.5 The Four Core Characteristics of Definitive Sanctification 64
2.6 Summary 65

3. Active Justification 67
3.1 Clarification of Terms 68
3.2 Biblical Foundation of Active Justification 72
3.3 Doctrinal Development and Theological Context 74
3.4 Misunderstanding, Neglect, and Misuse of Active Justification . . . 76
3.4.1 Misunderstanding: Active Justification Undermines the Reformation's Doctrine of Justification *Sola fide* 76
3.4.1.1 Tipton's Argument 76
3.4.1.2 A Response to Tipton 78
3.4.2 Neglect: Opening the Door to Antinomianism 81
3.4.2.1 Important Historical Background in the Development of Antinomianism 82
3.4.2.2 A Case Study in Anti-Arminian Antinomianism: John Eaton 84
3.4.2.3 How Eaton's View Differs from Active Justification . . 88
3.4.3 Misuse: Opening the Door to Hyper-Calvinism 89
3.4.3.1 A Brief Background of Hyper-Calvinism 90
3.4.3.2 A Case Study in Hyper-Calvinistic Justification: John Brine 92
3.4.3.3 Brine's "Justification from Eternity" Is Not Active Justification 95
3.5 The Four Parallel Characteristics of Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification 96
3.6 Summary 97

Part II: The Four Parallel Characteristics of Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification

4. Parallel Characteristic No. 1: Inseparability in Herman Bavinck 101
4.1 Bavinck and the *via media* 102
4.2 Bavinck's Soteriological Views 106
4.2.1 Bavinck and Definitive Sanctification 106

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

4.2.1.1 Evangelical Sanctification and Legal Sanctification . . 108
4.2.1.2 Passive Sanctification and Active Sanctification 113
4.2.1.3 Trinitarian Perspective on Sanctification 114
4.2.2 Bavinck and Active Justification 116
4.2.2.1 Theological Reaction 118
4.2.2.2 Judicial Decision (Objective) and Actual Possession (Subjective) 118
4.2.2.3 Active Justification as Acquisition and Passive Justification as Application 120
4.2.2.4 Active Versus Eternal Justification 123
4.2.2.5 The Relationship of Active Justification to Faith 125
4.2.2.6 Significance of the Distinction between Active and Passive Justification 127
4.3 Summary 130

5. Parallel Characteristic No. 2: Objectivity and Decisiveness in Alexander Comrie 133
5.1 Comrie in the *Nadere Reformatie*, the Dutch Further Reformation . 134
5.2 Comrie and Theological Conflict 139
5.3 Comrie's Soteriological Views 140
5.3.1 Comrie and Definitive Sanctification 140
5.3.1.1 Four Core Characteristics in Comrie's Definitive Sanctification 141
5.3.1.2 Causal Language 144
5.3.2 Comrie and Active Justification 145
5.3.2.1 Comrie Distinguishes between Active and Passive Justification 147
5.3.2.2 Comrie's View of Eternal Justification 150
5.3.2.3 Comrie's View of the Distinction between Active and Eternal Justification 152
5.3.2.4 Causal Language 154
5.4 Summary 157

6. Parallel Characteristic No. 3: Christ-centeredness in Herman Witsius . 159
6.1 Witsius as Theological Arbiter 160
6.2 The "Covenant of God with the Elect" in Witsius' Soteriology . . . 162
6.3 Witsius' Soteriological Views 163
6.3.1 Witsius and Definitive Sanctification 163
6.3.1.1 Twofold and Fourfold Sanctification 163
6.3.1.2 The New State of Being in Christ 164

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

6.3.1.3 Relation to Perfection or Completion of Sanctification 167
6.3.1.4 The Christ-Centered and Trinitarian Perspective of Sanctification 169
6.3.2 Witsius and Active Justification 170
6.3.2.1 Witsius' Eclecticism 170
6.3.2.2 Witsius' Distinctions in Justification 173
6.3.2.3 Christ-Centered Active Justification 175
6.4 Foundation of Witsius' Christ-Centered Soteriology 177
6.5 Summary 180

7. Parallel Characteristic No. 4: God's Sovereignty in Salvation in Abraham Kuyper 181
7.1 Kuyper against Human-centered Ideas 182
7.1.1 Mixed opinions of Kuyper 182
7.1.2 Kuyper's Proposition 185
7.2 Kuyper's Soteriological Views 188
7.2.1 Kuyper and Definitive Sanctification 188
7.2.1.1 The Twofold Framework of Sanctification 189
7.2.1.2 The Role of Human Beings in Progressive Sanctification 194
7.2.1.3 Kuyper on Perfectionism 196
7.2.2 Kuyper on Active Justification 197
7.2.2.1 Active Justification and Objective Justification 197
7.2.2.2 Active Justification and Justification from Eternity . . 199
7.2.2.3 Active Justification and Faith 202
7.3 God's Sovereignty in Salvation 204
7.4 Summary 205

Part III: The Soteriological Significance of Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification

8. Theological and Practical Significance of Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification 209
8.1 Theological Significance 209
8.1.1 Providing a Balanced Soteriology 209
8.1.2 Securing an Appropriate Understanding of God's Sovereignty in Salvation 212
8.2 Practical Significance 214
8.2.1 Providing Sound Assurance and Perseverance 215
8.2.2 Overcoming Spiritual Triumphalism and Defeatism 219
8.3 Summary 220

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

9. Conclusion 221

Bibliography 225

Author Index 257

Subject Index 261

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Preface

This book is a revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation. For several years it has been my privilege to study under the tutelage of Dr. John Bolt. His thoughtful and thorough guidance and advice throughout the dissertation process has borne fruit not only in my work but also in my heart. His standard and example of academic excellence is one I hope to emulate, and his passionate devotion to the study of Dutch Reformed theology has confirmed my own desire to continue in the same vein.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, Dr. Lyle D. Bierma, Dr. Richard A. Muller, Dr. John W. Cooper, Dr. Calvin P. Van Reken, and Dr. Joel R. Beeke. Dr. Feenstra, my Th.M. program supervisor and reader of my dissertation, not only taught me theological methodology but his rigorous attitude towards scholarship has greatly influenced my approach to the work. Dr. Bierma, Ph.D. program director and another of my readers, provided insightful commentary on the preliminary version of my proposal as well as skillful handling of a myriad of administrative tasks. Dr. Muller taught me much about the significance of Reformed Orthodox theology; I also profited greatly from the two years I worked for him as his teaching assistant. Dr. Cooper showed me how to approach theological matters with sound and constructive philosophical thinking. Dr. Van Reken provided valuable opportunities to ponder the necessity of a moral theology, not only in the academic arena but in every area of my life. Dr. Beeke, an external reader of my dissertation, provided very helpful comments and suggestions on my dissertation.

Calvin Theological Seminary supplied many invaluable services during my tenure. The Hekman Library Interlibrary Loan Department and MelCat Service were indispensable in helping me access materials I otherwise would not have been able to obtain. Proofreaders Denise Smith and Sally Van Noord in the Rhetoric Center greatly improved the readability of my papers, and Assistant to the Director of Doctoral Studies Barbara Blackmore was so thoughtful and always had a welcoming smile for which I am very grateful.

I would not have been able to concentrate on my studies and complete the Ph.D. program without the George and Johanna te Velde Seminary Scholarship and the Ben and Lee Muller Doctoral Fellowship Scholarship.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Rev. Chan Soo Lee of the Bundang Woori Church, South Korea, generously helped me to overcome difficulties and finish my ordination well.

I am also indebted to Jon Gougar who approached me after my oral defense offering to edit my thesis. His command of vocabulary and grammar transformed the text into what I believe is now an enjoyable read in native English.

All of my friends and colleagues at Calvin have provided much appreciated support. Hyo-nam Kim and I had many heart-to-heart talks about church, society, and theology; our conversations helped lift the weight of constant study. Byung Hoon Woo always encouraged me to take each step forward during my years at Calvin. Byungsoo Han, my Ph.D. carrel mate, heartily advised me throughout my studies at Calvin. Without their lively companionship my late night studies would have been very lonely.

The ceaseless prayers of my parents are a powerful driving force, while my two adorable daughters, Si-Eun and Cheryn, always make me smile; they are truly gifts from God.

Without the quiet perseverance, support, and self-sacrifice of my wife Jeeyoun I would never have been able to finish the program. I can only hope to return to her a small measure of what she has given me.

Finally and most importantly, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to God who called, adopted, and saved me. During my entire time at Calvin God has provided invaluable opportunities for me to experience *who He is.* This experience has been the most significant event in my life so far, a foundation on which the rest of my life will be built. *Soli Deo gloria!*

November, 2016 Jae-Eun Park

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Thesis Statement

In theological literature the term justification is often used in place of the more precise term "passive" justification, the once-for-all declarative act of forgiveness which takes place in the conscience of the sinner and is logically tied to faith (i. e., sinners are *justified by faith*).[1] Similarly, the term sanctification often replaces the more explicit term "progressive" sanctification, the believer's ongoing, life-long process of becoming holy.[2] For several hundred years, in an effort to dispel confusion and account for all the dimensions of salvation, scholars have advanced and defended the concepts of "active" justification and "definitive" sanctification as necessary corollaries to passive justification and progressive sanctification respectively.

In particular, John Murray (1898–1975), professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (1930–1967) who was influential in American conservative Presbyterian circles, challenged the idea that sanctification is *merely* the ongoing process lasting a lifetime. He provided two basic reasons for the need for the concept of *definitive* sanctification.

First, in Murray's judgment any soteriology that incorporates the idea of human ability or activity into the doctrine of sanctification fails to measure up to biblical truth.[3] Second, in his opinion Scripture itself speaks of sanctification or

1 According to Berkhof, "[w]hen the Bible speaks of justification, it usually refers to what is known as passive justification." See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 517 (hereafter, *ST*). See also Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 231–232.

2 Berkhof, ST, 534; Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, 5th ed., vol. 3 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 213–258; Robert L. Dabney, Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology Taught in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, 6th ed. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927), 660–674; William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3d ed. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003), 803–806.

3 John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edin-

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

holiness as definitive, saying that "it is a fact too frequently overlooked that in the New Testament [e. g., 1 Cor 1:2, 6:11, etc.] the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of a process, but of a *once-for-all definitive act*" (emphasis added).[4] Through the concept of definitive sanctification, Murray emphasizes that a believer's union with Christ points to a holiness that is a *fait accompli*. Definitive sanctification also preserves the concept that God is the only source and agent of sanctification.

Meanwhile other Reformed theologians, such as Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), Louis Berkhof (1873–1957), and Francis Turretin (1623–1687) et al. have distinguished between the active and passive dimensions of justification to counter the antinomian and neonomian misconceptions that often accompany the traditional doctrine of justification.[5] Antinomianism emphasizes absolutely

burgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 277; previously published in *Calvin Theological Journal* 2, no.1 (April 1967): 5–21.

4 John Murray, "The Agency in Definitive Sanctification," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 285–286, 304. See also John Murray, "The Pattern of Sanctification," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 305–312. What Murray keeps in mind would be the Chaferian notion of sanctification. In the Chaferian concept of sanctification, the believer is not a *participant in* sanctification, but the *primary agent* of sanctification, actualized only by the believer's own faith in a kind of Pelagian sense. See, e. g., Peter C. Nelson, *Bible Doctrines: A Series of Studies Based on the Statement of Fundamental Truths as Adopted by the General Council of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield: Gospel Pub. House, 1948), 104; Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield: Gospel Pub. House, 1937); Ralph W. Harris, *Our Faith and Fellowship: Teacher's Manual* (Springfield: Gospel Pub. House, 1963), 24; Ernest S. Williams, *Systematic Theology* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), 2:256. Cf. Charles C. Ryrie, "Contrasting Views of Sanctification," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 194–195. For an extensive exposition concerning the old Princeton Presbyterian response to the Holiness movement, see David D. Cho, "The Old Princeton Presbyterian Response to the Holiness Movement in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in America" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1994).

5 The scholastic distinction of active/passive justification has a long tradition in Reformed theology. See, e. g., Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 4:200–204, 219–223 (hereafter, *RD*); Berkhof, *ST*, 517; Francis Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae, status controversiae perspicue exponitur, praecipua orthodoxorum argumenta proponuntur & vindicantur, & fontes solutionum aperiuntur*, 3 vols. (1696), 2:731 (16.7.1), 748 (16.9.9); idem, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992), 2:669, 684; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated From the Sources*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Allen, & Unwin, 1950), 555–559; Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man. Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank (Edinburgh, 1803), 1.2.7.16; 1.3.8.45, 47–48, 51–52, 56–57; 2.7.16 (hereafter, *Economy*); Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 2:376–381; Bartholomäus Keckermann, *Systema S.S. theologiae: Tribvs libris adornatum* (Hanoviae: Antonius, 1610), 3.7; Daniel Wyttenbach, *Tentamen theologiae dogmaticae methodo scientifica pertractatae* (Francofurti ad Moenum: Andreae et Hort, 1747), 2:939; Johann Heinrich Hei-

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

free justification before faith, thus neglecting the role of human responsibility in justification,[6] while neonomianism emphasizes human responsibility at the expense of God's sovereignty.

Active (or objective) justification, which takes place *in foro Dei* (in the court of God), logically *precedes* and is the *object* of faith. Passive (or subjective) justification which takes place *in foro conscientiae* (in the court of the sinner's conscience) logically *follows* faith.[7] This distinction precludes the theologian from seeing justification exclusively one way or the other.

Although the ideas of active justification and definitive sanctification have been widely accepted in conservative evangelical and Reformed circles for many years,[8] they have recently been criticized. For example, J. V. Fesko regards the

degger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 2 (Zürich: Ex officina Heideggeriana, 1732), 22.78–79 (p. 303); Leonard Rijssen, *Summa theologiae elencticae completa et didacticae quantum sufficit* (Bern: Georgii Sonnleitneri, 1676), 14 (pp. 184–198); Thomas Halyburton, *An Essay on the Ground or Formal Reason of Saving Faith. to Which Are Added, 2 Essays, Illustrative of the Subject of Justification* (London, 1865), 101–104; Samuel Maresius, *Collegium theologicum sive systema breve universae theologiae, comprehensum octodecim disputationibus* (Geneva, 1662), 11.58 (pp. 255–256); Johannes Maccovius, *Collegia theologica quae extant omnia, tertio ab auctore recognita, emendata & plurimis locis aucta, in partes duas distributa* (Franeker: Ulderici Balck, 1641), 129, 153, 423–425; Johannes Maccovius, *Scholastic Discourse: Johannes Maccovius (1588–1644) on Theological and Philosophical Distinctions and Rules*, trans. Willem J. Van Asselt et al. (Apeldoorn: Instituut voor Reformatieonderzoek, 2009), 231–237.

6 See section 3.4.2 of this study for a detailed discussion on this.

7 Berkhof, *ST*, 517; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:669, 684. James Buchanan employs the distinction between "actual" and "declarative" justification instead of an active/passive distinction. For Buchanan, actual justification is exactly the same as active justification, and declarative justification is the same as passive justification in terms of their connoted meaning. Yet, Buchanan's distinction seems to lead to confusion since active justification is more closed to the declarative meaning of justification (God's promise and decree to justify sinners *in foro Dei*) and passive justification is more closed to the meaning of justification's actuality (believers are actually justified by faith *in foro conscientiae*) as shall be examined onward. Cf. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of Its History in the Church, and of Its Exposition from Scripture. With Special Reference to Recent Attacks on the Theology of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), 233–239.

8 For the use of active justification, see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 555–559; Bavinck, *RD*, 4:202–204, 219–223; Berkhof, *ST*, 516–517. For the use of definitive sanctification, see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 757; Anthony A. Hoekema, "Reformed View," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 72–77; J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan: F. H. Revell, 1984), passim; David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Leicester: Apollos, 2000); Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Richard B. Gaffin, *"By Faith, Not by Sight": Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006), 77–78; John M. Frame, "Salvation and Theological Pedagogy," *Reformation & Revival* 14, no. 1 (2005): 57–70; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); Ivor J. Davidson, "Gospel Holiness: Some Dogmatic Reflections," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 189–211. See also incidental materials to deal briefly with the idea of

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

notion of definitive sanctification as an "unsatisfactory" doctrinal category derived from "exegetical fallacy."[9] Unlike Fesko, Michael Horton basically accepts the concept of definitive sanctification[10] but he raises questions about where Murray places definitive sanctification in the *ordo salutis.*[11] Lane Tipton questions Berkhof's concept of active justification because he believes that the idea "clouds a clear affirmation of justification *sola fide*"[12] and is at best a "fiction" that has no practical impact on the believer's life.[13]

Objections to active justification and definitive sanctification fall into three main categories: (1) they lack biblical support; (2) they produce theological confusion; and (3) they provide no practical benefit to believers. Much of the criticism rests on misunderstanding or misapplying the terms.

In response, this thesis asserts that both concepts are supported scripturally, provide theological clarity, and are of practical benefit to believers. This study presents a portrait of salvation that is *God-driven* while still affirming the ways in which human response and responsibility is required. Once misunderstandings are resolved and misapplications removed, both ideas will be shown to be biblically supported, theologically clarifying, and practically edifying.

Active justification and definitive sanctification have a common foundation in the gracious *objective* work of God in Christ on behalf of His own. Sinners are actively and objectively justified (made righteous) *in foro Dei* on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness. Definitive sanctification occurs when believers are decisively sanctified (made holy) *in foro conscientiae* on the basis of Christ's perfect holiness through mystical union with Him in His death and resurrection. Active justification and definitive sanctification have in common four important characteristics operating in parallel: (1) *Inseparability:* active justification is *in-*

definitive sanctification: John Piper and David Mathis, eds., *Acting the Miracle: God's Work and Ours in the Mystery of Sanctification* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 15; Nelson, *Bible Doctrines*, 104; Williams, *Systematic Theology*, 2:256; Harris, *Our Faith and Fellowship*, 24; Douglas Vickers, *The Cross: Its Meaning and Message in a Postmodern World* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub., 2010), 96; Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997), 407; Kenneth Keathly, "The Doctrine of Salvation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel Akin (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 407.

9 J. V. Fesko, "Sanctification and Union with Christ: A Reformed Perspective," *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (July 2010): 197, 208; idem, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2014), 257n69.

10 Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 248; idem, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 650–653.

11 Horton, *The Christian* Faith, 650n6.

12 Lane G. Tipton, "Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards Revisited: Union with Christ and Justification *Sola Fide*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 75, no. 1 (January 2013): 9–10. This article is a revised version of Tipton's inaugural address at Westminster Theological Seminary on November 13, 2012.

13 Tipton, "Biblical Theology," 9.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

separable from passive justification, and definitive sanctification is *inseparable* from progressive sanctification; (2) *Objective and Decisive Salvation:* justification and sanctification are both grounded solely in God's objective and decisive decree; (3) *Christ-centeredness:* Christ is the heart of believers' justification and sanctification; and (4) *God's Sovereignty:* believers' salvation in all its parts is under the gracious, sovereign disposition of the Heavenly Father.

These will be examined in the soteriology of four theologians from the broader Dutch Reformed tradition: the essential *inseparability* of active and passive justification and definitive and progressive sanctification in Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) in chapter 4; the *objective* and *decisive* character of salvation in Alexander Comrie (1706–1774) in chapter 5; the *Christ-centeredness* of salvation in Herman Witsius (1636–1708) in chapter 6; and *God as gracious sovereign* in salvation in Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) in chapter 7.

This paper will show that the ideas of definitive sanctification and active justification are biblically supported, theologically clarifying, and of practical help to the believer. They effectively remove any confusion between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, give greater assurance to believers about their perseverance to glory, and offer pastoral relief to those who may have lapsed into either triumphalism or defeatism.

1.2 Present Status of the Problem

1.2.1 Definitive Sanctification

Definitive sanctification, sometimes called "positional,"[14] "objective,"[15] or the "punctiliar" as opposed to the "linear" aspect of sanctification,[16] was advocated by Murray.[17] Although the idea can be found in prior writers,[18] he developed it further using sound theology and scriptural depth.

14 Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 443; Cornelius R. Stam, *True Spirituality* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1959), 79; Keith A. Kettenring, *The Sanctification Connection: An Exploration of Human Participation in Spiritual Growth* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), 9.

15 Anonymous, *The Gospel Herald; Or, Poor Christian's Magazine*, vol. 50 (Ipswich: London, 1882), 5.

16 Chester K. Lehman, *The Holy Spirit and the Holy Life* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1959), 108. Cf. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 747–748.

17 Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," 5–21; idem, "The Agency in Definitive Sanctification." For the biblical exegesis on Romans that is related with the idea of definitive sanctification, see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:277–284.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

In contrast to the ongoing lifelong process of progressive sanctification, definitive sanctification holds that believers *are already* sanctified in a decisive way when they are mystically united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Since the dominion of sin is ended upon the believer's union with Christ, sin is "no longer *en rapport* with life."[19] Definitive sanctification is therefore the "once-for-all definitive and irreversible breach with the realm in which sin reigns in and unto death." Believers definitively and decisively "died to sin" and are "translated into another realm … [namely] the sphere of life" through union with Christ.[20] Murray finds definitive sanctification in biblical testimonies such as 1 Corinthians 1:2, where believers are "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," and 1 Corinthians 6:11, where believers were "washed, sanctified, and justified."

Murray's proposal has had a mixed reception. Some embrace the idea and use it in their own soteriology.[21] Others object to it because they believe the notion confuses sanctification with justification.[22]

Murray and others including David Peterson[23] are concerned that the progressive aspect of sanctification, i. e., the call for believers to grow in holiness, has been emphasized at the expense of the clear New Testament teaching that in Christ believers *are already* holy (e. g., 1 Cor 1:2, 1 Cor 6:11, Rom 6:1–7:6, 1 Pet 2:24, etc.).[24] This one-sided emphasis leads to the belief that sanctification is accomplished primarily through human will and effort. Advocates of definitive sanctification are not opposed to progressive sanctification,[25] but they also point to Scriptures that support a definitive, objective holiness for believers.[26]

18 See, e. g., Nelson, Bible Doctrines, 104; Pearlman, Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible; Harris, Our Faith and Fellowship, 24; Williams, Systematic Theology, 2:256.

19 Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," 279.

20 Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," 279.

21 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 757; Hoekema, "Reformed View;" Peterson, *Possessed by God*; Piper and Mathis, *Acting the Miracle*, 15; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 150–152; Nelson, *Bible Doctrines*, 104; Williams, *Systematic Theology*, 2:256; Harris, *Our Faith and Fellowship*, 24; Vickers, *The Cross*, 96; Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 407; Keathly, "The Doctrine of Salvation;" Davidson, "Gospel Holiness: Some Dogmatic Reflections."

22 Fesko, "Sanctification and Union with Christ."

23 Peterson, *Possessed by God.*

24 Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 11–14. See also Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," 277. Cf. James M. Howard, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

25 As claimed, for example, by Henri Blocher, see Henri Blocher, "Sanctification by Faith?," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 59n9.

26 Cf. John Murray, "Progressive Sanctification," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 294–304.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

There are also writers who include a semblance of definitive sanctification in their doctrine of sanctification. These divide sanctification into two types – definitive and progressive – and regard them as two sides of the same coin (i. e., "holiness").[27] Or, alternatively, they understand sanctification as taking place in three stages of an "already but not yet" eschatology: (1) the *definitive beginning* of sanctification at regeneration; (2) *progressive development* in this life; (3) *completion* of sanctification in the eschaton.[28] In this sense, definitive sanctification is understood as one of the multiple aspects of sanctification – represented as the *initial inner stage* of sanctification.[29] However, none of these have examined definitive sanctification in detail but only in broad strokes as part of a general discussion. A more detailed explanation of the notion of definitive sanctification is therefore called for.[30]

There are also those who are altogether uncomfortable with definitive sanctification. Fesko is convinced that the notion of definitive sanctification is an "unhelpful" category and an "unsatisfactory" notion in the *ordo salutis*.[31] Fesko holds that the category of definitive sanctification is founded on an exegetical and interpretative fallacy, and if accepted it confuses sanctification with forensic justification. Michael Horton admits that Murray's idea is theologically helpful and employs it in his own exposition of sanctification.[32] Nevertheless, he distances himself from Murray because he thinks that in Murray's system definitive and progressive sanctification look like two distinct points in the *ordo salutis*, not two aspects of the same reality.[33]

Definitive sanctification has been defended by an appeal to crucial New Testament texts[34] as well as to sources in the historic Reformed tradition.

27 Piper and Mathis, *Acting the Miracle*, 15–16.

28 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 747–748.

29 Hoekema, "Reformed View," 72–77; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 747; John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 79–84.

30 Although thinkers like Murray and Peterson have precisely examined the nature of definitive sanctification, their work has not directly dealt with current criticisms of definitive sanctification. This study will fill this gap.

31 Fesko, "Sanctification and Union with Christ," 197, 207.

32 Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 248; idem, *The Christian Faith*, 650–653.

33 Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 650n6.

34 Most works that defend the notion of definitive sanctification appeal to its biblical foundation. See Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 407; Erroll Hulse, "Definitive Sanctification," in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, International Baptist Conference (Toronto: Toronto Baptist Seminry & Bible College, 1990), 28–41; Erroll Hulse, *The Doctrine and Practice of Holiness* (Faverdale North: EP Books, 2011), 81–92; Kettenring, *The Sanctification Connection*, 9; Joseph A. Pipa, "Definitive Sanctification: Righteousness Leading to Holiness," in *Sanctification: Growing in Grace*, eds. Joseph A. Pipa and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2001), 1–16; David Mathis, "Introduction: The Search for Sanctification's Holy Grail," in *Acting the Miracle: God's Work and Ours in the Mystery of Sanctification*, eds. John Piper and

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

Scripture passages in defense of definitive sanctification include: 1 Corinthians 1:2,[35] 1 Corinthians 6:11,[36] and Romans 6:1–7:6.[37]

Defense of definitive sanctification also includes an appeal to witnesses from the historic Reformed tradition. Richard Gaffin, adhering closely to Calvin's *Commentary on Romans*, labels the idea of definitive sanctification as a "crucial soteriological truth."[38] Ralph Cunnington similarly finds the idea of definitive sanctification in John Calvin and several Reformed Confessions.[39] In his dissertation, Mark Snoeberger draws definitive sanctification from John Calvin and

David Mathis (Weaton: Crossway, 2013), 13–28; Victor Adrian, "Definitive Sanctification" (ThM Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1961).

35 Some call attention to the perfect participle form of the verb *ἁγιάζω* (I sanctify) in 1 Cor 1:2. See, e. g., Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 373; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 32; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 76; Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 40–46.

36 The aorist passive form of *ἁγιάζω* in 1 Cor 6:11 (*ἡγιάσθητε*) also suggests the idea of definitive sanctification. See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 246; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 454; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 373; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 216–217; D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God's Word* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), August 27 entry; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 16; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 126.

37 Much depends on whether Rom 6:1–7:6 is about justification or sanctification. See Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 96–109. Fesko thinks that Rom 6:1–7:6 is about justification, not sanctification. See Fesko, "Sanctification and Union with Christ," 212–213. On the interpretation of Rom 6:1–14 in the context of definitive sanctification, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 352; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 346–371; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 429–430; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 1:296.

38 "This [the idea of definitive sanctification] is the crucial soteriological truth that in the inception of the application of redemption, at the moment sinners are united to Christ by faith, they are delivered from sin's enslaving power, from bondage to sin as master." See Richard B. Gaffin, "A Response to John Fesko's Review," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009): 111. Gaffin's article is a response to Fesko's review article, "A Tale of Two Calvins: A Review Article," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009): 98–104. One thing that is lamentable in the debate between Gaffin and Fesko is that the notion of definitive sanctification is highly exploited simply for the purpose of defending their argument. In this appropriation, the notion's original intention and meaning seems to significantly fade way. As a result, unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding of the notion of definitive sanctification is evident. To avoid this error, the present study will begin by clarifying the very natures of the notion that have been overlooked in the debate. And then, this study will show that a clarified understanding of definitive sanctification provides theological and practical benefits, not confusion.

39 Ralph Cunnington, "Definitive Sanctification: A Response to John Fesko," *Evangelical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (July 2012): 234–252.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

John Owen.[40] Their proposals are significant but also of somewhat limited value because opponents such as Fesko also appeal to Calvin.[41]

1.2.2 Active Justification

Debates over active justification follow a pattern similar to those over definitive sanctification. It has also been neglected, misunderstood, and misused by antinomians and hyper-Calvinists who also fail to see the proper distinction between active justification and passive justification.[42] Antinomians seek to magnify God's sovereignty out of proportion by focusing only on justification in the presence of God. In this they miss passive justification, opening the door to a neglect of the law and the need for sanctification.[43] When hyper-Calvinists teach that justification is an immanent act of God from eternity, thus equating active justification with eternal justification or even with decree *per se,* they produce the

40 Mark A. Snoeberger, "Definitive Sanctification: Threading a Path between Legal Fiction and Works Righteousness" (PhD diss., Baptist Bible Seminary, 2007), esp., 46–93.

41 Fesko, "Sanctification and Union with Christ," passim. Since entering into a scholarly debate on Calvin's interpretation of Romans is beyond the scope of this study, it will not be dealt with in detail.

42 Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, 158–161; Carl R. Trueman, "John Owen on Justification," in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Fearn: Mentor, 2007), 81–98; Robert J. McKelvey, "'That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism': Eternal Justification," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 233–235, 259–262.

43 For a detailed examination about English antinomianism and its perspective on justification, see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification In Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993), passim; J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), passim; Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), passim; Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, eds., "Thomas Goodwin and Johannes Maccovius on Justification from Eternity," in *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 133–148. For a detailed discussion on antinomianism *per se*, see Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg: P&R Pub., 2013); William K. B Stoever, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978); T. D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); David Como, "Puritans and Heretics: The Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Early Stuart England" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999); Norman Brooks Graebner, "Protestants and Dissenters: An Examination of the Seventeenth-Century Eatonist and New England Antinomian Controversies in Reformation Perspective" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1984); Christopher Earl Caughey, "Puritan Responses to Antinomianism in the Context of Reformed Covenant Theology: 1630–1696" (PhD diss., Trinity College, 2013).

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

same fruit as the antinomians.[44] Emphasizing active justification leads to thinking of justification as an eternal act of God that makes the believer's act of faith unnecessary and irrelevant.[45] It is important to note that the distinction between active justification and passive justification effects a *logical* and not a *temporal* order.[46]

Although it is understandable that the idea of active justification has been neglected historically and remains so today, when criticisms are found in contemporary theological literature they often indicate a misunderstanding of it. For example, Timothy Price rather arbitrarily equates active justification with eternal justification.[47] Tipton also criticizes Berkhof 's use of active justification, arguing that "if active justification logically precedes faith, then active justification logically precedes faith-union with Christ. This is not possible from a biblical and confessional perspective."[48] Tipton believes that the concept of active justification denies the truth that "*justification sola fide depends on union with Christ sola fide*" (emphasis in the original).[49]

This study holds that most objections to active justification and definitive sanctification come from conceptual misunderstanding of the terms themselves. When such misunderstandings are removed, the theological and practical validity and value of both ideas become obvious. It appears that no recent studies

44 James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 89. For the detailed discussion on hyper-Calvinism, see Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689–1765* (London: Olive Tree, 1967); David Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980); Gerald L. Priest, "Andrew Fuller, Hyper-Calvinism, and the 'Modern Question,'" in *"At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word": Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Waynesboro: Paternoster Press, 2004), 43–73; Curt D. Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Tom J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986); Peter Naylor, *Picking Up a Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Grace, 1992).

45 Ralph Wardlaw, *Systematic Theology*, ed. James Robinson Campbell (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1857), 188–189.

46 Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 555–557; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:682–683; Geerhardus Vos, *Systematische theologie: Compendium* (Grand Rapids, 1905), 24, 98; J. van Genderen and W. H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. Gerrit Bilkes and Ed M. van der Maas (Phillipsburg: P&R Pub., 2008), 621–622; Bavinck, *RD*, 3:583, 590–595; 4:214–219; G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 143–168; John Murray, *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 102–103, 119–131; Berkhof, *ST*, 517–520; à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 2:380–382.

47 Timothy Shaun Price, "John Calvin and Herman Bavinck on the Doctrine of Justification in Relation to Ethics," in *Since We Are Justified by Faith: Justification in the Theologies of the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Michael Parsons (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 138–149.

48 Tipton, "Biblical Theology," 8.

49 Tipton, "Biblical Theology," 10.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

have undertaken to clarify the meaning of both active justification and definitive sanctification in opposition to the recent criticisms; this paper will endeavor to fill that void.

1.3 Proposed Method

Definitive sanctification and active justification are distinct but complementary. The need for justification speaks to our guilt or unrighteousness, and the need for sanctification speaks to our pollution or unholiness. However, since justification and sanctification are God-driven but also involve human participation in faith and obedience, it follows that the problems, misunderstandings, and misuses of both ideas, though distinct, also correlate. Therefore, at the outset we state the conviction that definitive sanctification and active justification have in common the clear understanding that there is a scriptural balance between gracious, divinely sovereign initiative and grateful human response and responsibility. To demonstrate this, we will examine four parallel characteristics or properties common to active justification and definitive sanctification: Inseparability, Decisive and Objective Salvation, Christ-centeredness, and God's Sovereignty in Salvation. These parallel properties will show that active justification and definitive sanctification equally affirm that the believer's salvation is ultimately *God-driven.* They also maintain that the believer's justification and sanctification is grounded in an actual, once-for-all reality ("Objectivity" and "Decisiveness" respectively) that is solidly rooted in Christ's perfect righteousness and holiness ("Christ-centeredness"), bound up and in perfect balance with human responsibility ("Inseparability") and entirely governed by God's absolute sovereignty ("God's Sovereignty in Salvation"). These parallel characteristics of active justification and definitive sanctification display the truth that *no one other than God* justifies and sanctifies sinners, thus revealing a God-driven salvation. In this study, each of the four characteristics will be discussed by examining four notable theologians in the broader Dutch Reformed tradition who elucidated the respective characteristics, i. e., Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper.

The first parallel characteristic of active justification and definitive sanctification is that they each are *inseparable* from passive justification and progressive sanctification, respectively.[50] This inseparability answers the objection that active justification contradicts justification *sola fide* and the concern that definitive

50 See James Eglinton, "On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 167–188.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

sanctification might minimize the importance of progressive sanctification.[51] While the two dimensions of justification and of sanctification are distinctive, they are never divided. The theological significance and practical benefit of the idea of inseparability will be examined in Bavinck's soteriology.

The second parallel characteristic in the two ideas is that they both point to a *decisive* and *objective* reality of salvation. Specifically, the objective quality of active justification is often misunderstood as coincident with eternal justification.[52] However, since active justification must be distinguished from the erroneous idea of eternal justification, this study will present the superiority of active or objective justification as revealed in the writings of Comrie.

The third parallel characteristic of active justification and definitive sanctification is that they are each *Christ-centered*, i. e., the believer's salvation is established and maintained through mystical union with Christ and His meritorious work of satisfaction. Some critics assert that definitive sanctification creates theological confusion because it either treats sanctification and justification as an amalgam or it erroneously occupies two distinct moments in the *ordo salutis*. These objections are answered by showing that the real value of definitive sanctification lies in its unique ability to describe the condition or state of the believer's sharing in Christ's perfect holiness in union with Him rather than merely asserting a particular sequence in the *ordo*. This understanding of the Christ-centeredness of the two concepts is developed in Witsius, whose understanding of justification and sanctification emphasizes union with Christ and His meritorious work.

The fourth parallel characteristic shared by active justification and definitive sanctification focuses on *God's sovereignty in salvation*. In both definitive sanctification and active justification, any role of human merit in salvation is ruled out. Yet this does not mean that the believer's salvation is deterministic or fatalistic; rather, the point is that believers' forgiveness and holiness are solely gifts of God's grace. Even in passive justification where faith is indispensable and in progressive sanctification where human will and activity are required, God's absolute sovereignty in salvation is always upheld. In this study, the complete reliance on God's sovereignty in both justification and sanctification will clearly be seen in Kuyper's soteriology.

By looking at the four parallel characteristics of active justification and definitive sanctification in the soteriology of Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper, the essence of these two ideas will be conceptually clarified, criticisms will be answered, and the theological and practical significance and relevance of

51 Cf. Tipton, "Biblical Theology," 10; Blocher, "Sanctification by Faith?" 64.
52 Cf. Price, "John Calvin and Herman Bavinck on the Doctrine of Justification," 148.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842

active justification and definitive sanctification will be discovered, affirming that every aspect of salvation is God-driven.

1.4 Outline – A Study in Three Parts

Part I – Definitive Sanctification and Active Justification Defined
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Thesis Statement
Chapter 2 – Clarification of terms; outline of Murray's view of definitive sanctification; comparison with progressive sanctification; close examination of biblical texts (esp., Rom 6:1–14, 1 Cor 1:2, and 6:11) and confessional evidence (Heidelberg Catechism and Westminster Confession of Faith); the essence of definitive sanctification as found in Swiss-Italian Reformed theologian Francis Turretin (1623–1687); introduction to recent doctrinal objections to the idea (Fesko) and initial response to his criticisms. The main purpose of chapter 2 is to clarify the meaning, scope, and validity of definitive sanctification in order to resolve misconceptions and misunderstanding.
Chapter 3 – Clarification of the difference between active justification and passive justification; examination of the biblical foundation (esp., Gen 3:15); explanation of its doctrinal development and historical context; introduction to another recent doctrinal objection (Tipton); examination of theological neglect (John Eaton in the tradition of English antinomianism) and misuse or abuse of the concept (John Brine in the tradition of hyper-Calvinism); initial response to criticism, neglect, and misuse.
Part II – "Four Parallel Characteristics of Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification," includes four theologians who each elucidate one of the parallels, i. e., Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper.
Chapter 4 – Examine the first parallel characteristic of definitive sanctification and active justification (*"Inseparability"*) as revealed in the soteriology of Bavinck. Just as divine initiative and sovereignty is inseparable from human responsibility to believe and obey, so active justification is inseparable from passive justification and definitive sanctification inseparable from progressive sanctification. This inseparability found in Bavinck's soteriology is necessary to refute objections that fail to take it into account.
Chapter 5 – Examine the second parallel characteristic, "*The Decisive and Objective Reality of Salvation*," through the lens of Alexander Comrie's soteriology.
Chapter 6 – Examine the third parallel characteristic, "*Christ-centeredness,*" through the soteriology of Herman Witsius, particularly his understanding that definitive sanctification is not a distinct element in the "order" or "sequence" in salvation, but rather a "condition" or "state" of being definitively sanctified in union with Christ and sharing in His holiness.

© 2018, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525552841 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647552842