

[Open Peer Review on Qeios](#)

Rethinking sanctification from Jacobus Arminius' point of view and its implication in Christian daily life

Tolop Marbun¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pelita Dunia

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Abstract

This research examines sanctification from the view of Jacobus Arminius. After reading the work of James Arminius, the author discovers that Arminis left an unanswered question on the topic of sanctification. The unanswered question leads to different interpretations of sanctification in the thinking of Arminius. The purpose of this research is to answer the unanswered question. The method is library research. The data is primary and secondary. The analytic method is content analysis. All data is displayed descriptively. The result is the sanctification is perfect or complete in the stage of initial and ultimate sanctification; sanctification is not complete yet in the stage of progressive sanctification.

Tolop Oloan Marbun

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pelita Dunia

Email: tolopomarbun@gmail.com

Keywords: sanctification, initial sanctification, progressive sanctification, and the ultimate sanctification.

Introduction

Jacobus Arminius was born in the Netherlands. Arminius attended school in Marburg, Leiden, Geneva, and Basel. From 1588 to 1803, he was the pastor of a congregation in Amsterdam. He spent his final six years as a professor at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. (Enns, 2014).

Arminius was a staunch Calvinist in the beginning since he had learned from Beza, Calvin's son-in-law. Koornhert and Arminius once exchanged arguments. Koornheert defeated him in the contest. The other reason was that Arminius continued to have numerous concerns regarding the tenets of Reform theology. Calvin's theology of predestination and reprobation offended Arminius. Predestination and reprobation were adjusted by Arminius to constitute the core of his theology. "God might not be the author of sin, not man automation in the hand of God," he attempted to change. He

argued that man can respond to God and work with Him for Salvation. (Davie, 2016).

The teachings of Arminius is completely opposed to that of Calvinism. The followers and successors of Arminius are attributed to developing the five foundations of Calvinist doctrine. However, the author's concentration in this research is on sanctification and various topics that are related to it, primarily from Arminius' writings. The author will not analyze the five pillars of Calvinist teaching. For a more complete understanding, the author will examine the theories of various theologians, whether they are his rivals or his successors.

Method

The library study approach is applied in this research. The author examines and critically analyzes the material to develop a frame of mind to address Arminius' unresolved questions (Fadli, 2021) Content analysis was employed as the analytical approach. The data is displayed descriptively (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Result and discussion

Sanctification

Sanctification, in its broadest sense, is the process by which an object, location, or person is made holy and acceptable to God. Sanctification, in the narrow definition (or Christian sense), is the process by which a Christian is rendered holy and acceptable to God (Davie, 2016). The terms "holy" and "acceptable to God" are significant in this definition and will be discussed more in the following section.

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby God renews in the whole man after the image of God and enable more and more to rid unto sins and love unto righteousness (Shedd, 2003). Sanctification also the progressive process in making them like Christ (Grudem, 1994).

Sanctification is every act of divine grace by which the Holy Spirit turns a person from sin to holiness (Muller, 1955). Sanctification is the process by which the power of the new being transforms personally and the community, both inside and outside the church (Tillich, 1988). Sanctification is a separation from the world to God, an imputation of Christ as a believer's holiness, purification from moral evil, and conformance to the image of Christ (Thiessen, 1963).

Based on various definitions of sanctification, the author defines sanctification as God's progress work in transforming Christians' lives from sin to holiness through the Holy Spirit, and being renewed the whole man after the image of God and transformed to Christ's likeness. On the other hand, sanctification is the effort of the Triune God to change believers into holy and sinless beings. In this sense, the activity of the Triune God is to separate believers from the world, impute Christ as believers' Holiness, purify them from moral evil, and form them in the image of Christ.

Sanctification in the Bible

The Old Testament uses several words to indicate holiness: *qadosh*, *qodesh*, *qadash*, *miqdash*, and *Hasid*. *Qadosh* refers to a location and individuals designated by God for a specific purpose. The basic sense of "holiness" is conveyed by *Qodesh*. "Sanctity" or "Consecration" denotes something set apart for the Lord's service. *Qodesh* refers to God's holiness. *Qadash* can mean both consecrate and dedicate. *Miqdash* refers to sanctuary *Hasid* refers to "saints." In the Old Testament, holiness refers not just to God's character, but also to persons and places set off or set apart for his service, especially the saints (Renn, 2014, pp. 493–494)

According to lexical meaning, in the Old Testament, God sets aside Saints for his purpose and sets them apart for the Lord's service in the sanctuary, they must be sanctified and consecrated for God is Holy, and Saints must dedicate themselves to God's purpose. In the Old Testament, holiness can be translated as sanctification.

There are various words in the New Testament that describe "holiness": *hagios*, *hagiazō*, *hagiamos*, *hosios*, *hosiotes*, *hagiosyne*, *hagiotēs*. *Hagios* refers to moral purity and is sometimes translated as "saint." *Hagios* also mentions the Holy Spirit. *Hagiazō* means "concentrate" or "make holy," but the underlying notion is "sanctify" or "set apart" persons and things for God's service. Specifically to God's and Jesus' actions. Jesus consecrates himself for the sake of His disciple (John 17:19), as well as for the sanctification of the Church (Ephesians 5:26). God proclaimed in John 10:36 that He had sanctified Christ's person and ministry, as well as His people (Acts 20:32; Hebrews 3:11; 10:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 6:11). "Sanctification" and "holiness" were the most common translations of *Hagiamos*. *Hosios* refers to God and Christ as being holy, or morally and religiously pure. *Hosiotes* signifies holiness, although it is also found alongside righteousness. While *Hagiosyne* is used to refer to the Holy Spirit. And the ultimate goal for which the Lord disciplines his people throughout their lives is *hagiotēs* (Renn, 2014, pp. 494–495).

According to lexical meaning, holiness in the New Testament, first, refers to saints who are being purified, and this is the ultimate objective for which the Lord disciplines his people throughout their lives; second, refers to concentrating and making holy by God's and Jesus' work. Jesus dedicates himself to His disciple and the sanctification of the Church. God announced that the person and ministry of Christ and His people had been sanctified. Third, it refers to things that are holy, or morally and religiously pure; it is ascribed to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Finally, holiness is found alongside righteousness.

Sanctification In the view Arminius

The meaning of Sanctification

Arminius distinguished between common and divine sanctification. Separated is the conventional usage; sanctified is the heavenly usage. The common term relates to nature; human nature; it is based on the pollution of sin. Human beings live in sin and obey sin. Divine usage is when someone lives in godliness and is transformed into holiness and righteousness (Arminius, 2002, p. 91).

Based on Arminius' definition. sanctification is the process of transitioning from natural to divine use; on the other hand, it is God's grace that purifies sinners from sin (s), yet believers from the darkness, dwelling in sin from its lust and desire, and imbues him with Spirit of knowledge, righteous, and holiness, and being separated from the world and transformed to the image of Christ, the man may live in God and have salvation. As a result, sanctification consists of two components: The old guy dies, and the new man comes to life by quacking or enlivening.

The Author of Sanctification

According to Arminius, God is the author of sanctification, the Holy Father in His son, the Holy of Holies, by the Holy Spirit. The outward instrumental is the Word, and the internal instrumental is Faith; yet, the Word does not sanctify unless faith is connected to the Word. When the Word is proclaimed, the Faith reacts, and it is at this point that the Word purifies man's heart.

The Subject and The Object of Sanctification

According to Arminius, the object of sanctification is sinners who are also a believer; sinners because they have committed or tend to sin. The sinner is unworthy to serve the Lord. The sinner must be converted to a believer. They are called believers because they believed in Jesus, in whom they found holiness, and because they conformed to his death and resurrection.

The subject is the soul of man; the first in the mind, which illuminated, the dark could of ignorant being driven away. Next, in the will, which is delivered from indwelling sins and is filled with the Spirit of holiness. While the body is still the same, though it is part of man that is consecrated to God. The purpose of the soul is changed become serving the Lord through sanctification.

The subject matter is man's soul; the first in the mind, which brightened, the dark might be pushed away from the ignorant. Following that, in the will, which has been cleansed of indwelling sin and is filled with the Spirit of holiness. While the body remains the same, it is a portion of man that has been devoted to God. The purpose of sanctification is to transform the soul so that individuals can serve the Lord(Arminius, 2002, p. 92).

The manifestation is found in the purification from sin and the conformity with God in Christ's body through His spirit. The result is that the believing man is consecrated to God as priest and king, and should serve him in the new life, to the glory of his divine name and for man's salvation.

The priest, as in the Old Testament, must sprinkle the blood for sin forgiveness. The blood of Jesus is likewise sprinkled on believers who are under His priesthood. The blood of Jesus is the expiation of sins that both justifies believers and contributes to their sanctification. The sprinkled blood is applied in justification to wash away sins; in sanctification, it is applied to sanctify individuals who receive forgiveness of sins.

According to Arminius, sanctification takes time, yet the men have been delivered on the cross. The power of sin is lessened day by day in man's body, and man is renewed day by day. While man carries Christ's death in his body, the

outside man perishes. As a result, Arminius posed the question of whether Christ's death results in perfect or complete sanctification.

Arminius did not instantly respond to the question, but he devised an indirect response. Faith becomes a duty to man because it entails sanctification, allowing them to experience a relationship with the Father and the Son and receive the blessing of sanctification. In other words, there is sanctification that Christ has accomplished perfectly, and sanctification that Christians experience on an ongoing basis through the Holy Spirit and the Word (Arminius, 2002, p. 93).

Response to Arminius' view

The author agrees that Arminius' and the divine's explanations will provide further insight into the sanctification. He clarified and split the definition of sanctification to make it more understandable to readers.

The author also agrees with Arminius' explanation of Trinity's function in sanctification, but he should enlarge on Jesus' involvement in sanctification. The God Father is indeed present in the Son, but the Son is more than just a mediator for the Father's sanctification; the Son shed his blood for the remission of sins. As he stressed "through the Spirit of Holiness," implies that the One who sanctifies is the Holy Spirit, which is correct but not the only one. This is one of the reasons why most of his followers and successors (called Armenians) place a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier, particularly Pentecostals (Dieter et al., 1996). They emphasize the Holy Spirit Baptism, and the sign is speaking in tongues (Arrington, 2015).

The author also agrees that the Holy Spirit uses the Word to sanctify, as Jesus taught that men are sanctified by His Word (Keneer, 2015). Arrington prioritized the sequence of sanctification. Though the order was not significant, he did follow Arminius. Although Arminius did not invent the doctrine of the three stages of sanctification, his concept of sanctification must be for daily sanctification because faith is still involved in this stage. Man will never know holiness unless he has faith. However, if Arminius stressed Jesus' blood for sanctification, he included it in all stages.

The author also agrees on the object of the sanctification of sinners and the process of sanctification in humans. One of the processes he mentioned, "the filling of the spirit of Holiness," is still ambiguous to the reader. This is one of the reasons why some groups or churches place more emphasis on "the filling of the Holy Spirit," which they associate with the Apostle's experience on Pentecost. They differentiate between being on the field and being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Rompis, 2017).

Arminius should elaborate on the function of the Trinity in sanctification. If "the filling of the Holy Spirit" means that when a person believes in Jesus, the Father and Son dwell in his life and the Holy Spirit seals him, it makes more sense. This is why most Pentecostal churches divided the filling of the Holy Spirit into two stages: before and after repentance (Dieter et al., 1996).

Arminius highlighted the results of the sprinkled blood of Christ in the context of justification and sanctification.

Sanctification is a process that takes time and is related to being delivered from the power of sin. The Author agrees with

Arminius, but Arminius should include more explanations in his teaching. Since Jesus accomplished his goal on the cross perfectly, justification and sanctification should be completed or perfect. John Wesley refined this into total sanctification. In other words, there should be perfect sanctification as well as unfinished sanctification, or progressive sanctification.

Three Stages Sanctification

Barackman divided sanctification into three categories: positional, practical, and final sanctification (Barackman, 1984). Grudem classified sanctification into three stages: sanctification begins with regeneration, continues throughout life, and is completed at death (Grudem, 1994). Horton, on the other hand, simply acknowledges progressive sanctification (Horton, 2011). The Author has determined the names for the stages of sanctification: *initial sanctification*, *progressive sanctification*, and *ultimate sanctification*. The author will respond to Arminius' left question through the three stages of sanctification.

Initial Sanctification

The term "initial salvation" refers to the act of first sanctifying. Before being born again, believers were enemies of God; after being born again, believers become sons of God because they are set apart and become members of God's family, and they are given authority (exousia) that can never be taken away (Renn, 2014).

The initial sanctification occurs at the Salvation. Sanctification is an instantaneous work of God that is flawless and complete for every believer, and it saves, saints, and holy people (Barackman, 1984). This is the first stage of moral transformation, the first step toward breaking the power and love of sin, and the first break with sin (Grudem, 1994).

Believers are not only God's sons, but also the "royal priesthood" (1Pe 2:9 ASV). As a royal priesthood, believers have direct access to God without the need for a priest, as in the Old Testament. Believers can freely worship God at any time and from any location, without the need for animal sacrifice. The following Initial is "the holy nation." A holy nation has been set apart for God. Heavenly nationality shall be granted. God has chosen a people for his kingdom to live with him in eternity.

Even though Arminius did not invented to three stage of sanctification, there is glimps that there is a beginning of sanctification as a result of the sprinkled blood of Christ, because the blood of Jesus is applied to each stage. The initial sanctification is perfect, once and for all. When a person is born again, he or she receives the first sanctification in a moment. The *initial sanctification* is entirely divine action; no human action is required; all that is required is for humans to believe and receive.

The author agrees with Arminius that this is related to the forgiveness of sin because it occurs and takes place at the same time. Without the forgiveness of sins, there is no initial sanctification. In truth, the forgiveness of sin is the key to each stage.

Progressive Sanctifications

Progressive sanctification occurs in daily life as spiritual growth and separation from sin; it is a process of divine actions (Barackman, 1984). The progressive sanctification emphasizes spiritual growth, renewal, and the pursuit of holiness in everyday life (Grudem, 1994).

The process of progressive sanctification is not yet complete. Christian must maintain God has made their life holy. Believers struggle to conquer sin. Sin has not yet been eradicated from the earth, but Christians will rule over it. Christians may slip into sin at the progressive sanctification stage, but they must confess their guilt and repent in order to maintain their holiness before God. Even though God instructed believers to be perfect, they will not be perfect until they reach the Ultimate Sanctification through physical death or rapture.

God also said, "You must therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat 5:48 ESV). The Greek word meaning "perfect" for human is "τέλειοι" which is derived from "τέλειος" which means "having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect." For a person, "τέλειος" signifies fully developed, mature, or adult, whereas God is perfect. The grammatical meaning of "τέλειος" for the human being is "future indicative middle" (Wallace, 2000). Believers will be perfect in the future, but while they dwell in the world, their perfection will be "progressive perfection."

Arminius highlighted that sanctification is not yet complete; it must be in the stage of progressive sanctification. Though believers have been justified and cleansed, they might fall into sin as long as they remain in the world, therefore they require daily sanctification; this is the reason called "incomplete sanctification." Incomplete sanctification refers to progressive sanctification.

The author agrees with Arminius that the Word is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit sanctifies because Jesus declared, "You are sanctified by my Word." The Word is essential in progressive sanctification because it guides, teaches, corrects, and leads to conformity to Christ's image. The author will not make any further comments on this point because Arminius has emphasized the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier. In the next section, as an answer to Arminius' unanswered questions in his work.

Ultimate Sanctifications

The ultimate sanctification will be experienced by his church when the Lord returns (Barackman, 1984). After death, the ultimate sanctification will occur, and sanctification will be complete (Grudem, 1994). Both definitions of final sanctification are accepted by the author. This is what the author refers to as "the Ultimate Sanctification," as it is the goal of all Christians. At this point, every believer will be perfect. This is perfect and complete. There is none of human effort in this stage. It is fully grace of God.

After the author responds to Arminius' views based on his work, it seems that the author agrees with him in most cases, however Arminius left unsolved questions. He inquired but did not respond. The author will respond through this research. In the stages of Initial and Ultimate Sanctifications, believers' sanctification is perfect and complete. This stage requires no human effort; it is just grace. On the cross, Jesus accomplished perfectly.

In the stage of progressive sanctification, a believer's sanctification is not complete. According to Arminius, the Holy Spirit

sanctifies believers through God's Word; therefore, believers must study, ponder on, and apply the Word in their lives. This is how the lives of believers are sanctified. Arminius thinks that believers should be led by the Holy Spirit and live according to His leadership. The author agrees with Arminius in the perspective of progressive sanctification. Because this topic is so important to Arminians, the author spends time elaborating on it.

The Answer to the Arminius Left Question

A believer's sanctification is not complete at the stage of progressive sanctification. According to Arminius, the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers through God's Word; consequently, believers must study, reflect, and apply the Word in their life. This is how the lives of believers are sanctified. According to Arminius, believers should be led by the Holy Spirit and live by His guidance. In terms of progressive sanctification, the author agrees with Arminius' views on sanctification.

Arminius taught baptism in two ways: outwardly and inwardly. Water is used for outward baptism, whereas internal baptism is associated with Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit (Arminius, 2002, pp. 87–88). However, Arminius did not discuss the Holy Spirit baptism in the context of sanctification. If Arminius is concerned about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is Biblical. The Bible mentions the Baptism of the Spirit, but there are no practical guidelines on how to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptizer emphasizes Jesus as the One who performs the Holy Spirit baptism.

Pentecostals typically followed Arminius's teaching, which is known as Arminians. The author doesn't consider Arminius accountable because everyone can express their preferences. While Arminius emphasized the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals emphasized the "filling of the Holy Spirit to experience progressive salvation, and the natural sign for it speaking in tongue." They differentiate between being filled (completely) and baptism with Holy Spirit, according to the Pentecostal viewpoint.

Normally, Pentecostals followed Arminius's teaching which is named, Arminians. The author did not blame Arminius because anyone can choose their preferences. As Arminius emphasized that the Holy Spirit is a sanctifier, the same Pentecostals put more emphasis on the "filling of Holy Spirit to experience progressive salvation, and the natural sign for it speaking in tongue." According to the Pentecostal perspective, they divide being filled (fully) and baptized with Holy Spirit.

First and foremost, the Author believes in Holy Spirit Baptism, and Jesus is the only one who can baptize people with the Holy Spirit. Second, when a believer is born again, he or she is sealed with the Holy Spirit. The moment believers are born again, the moment of "being filled" or "being baptized" with the Holy Spirit occurs once and for all, and there is no repetition.

Third, the Holy Spirit lives and dwells in the believer. They do not require the Holy Spirit to "fill" or "refill" them to be sanctified. Because the Holy Spirit is not bound by space, "the filling" and "the refilling" should not be about repetition, but about the submission of life. When Christians submit wholeheartedly to the Holy Spirit, they are filled with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit works fully in believers' lives as sanctifiers.

Fourth, speaking in tongues is a natural sign that a person filled with the Holy Spirit needs to be investigated properly.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other people's tongues. The key in this chapter is the people they heard as their natives. As a result, when believers talk in tongues, others or someone else must hear them in their native language (Acts chapter 2).

The key in this chapter (1 Corinthians 12-14) is that when someone speaks in a foreign tongue, someone else must interpret, and the number is two or three people, or else they speak for themselves voicelessly.

There is a time to agree to disagree to display understanding. If speaking in tongues is a natural sign that a person has been "filled" or "baptized" with the Holy Spirit, then "the speaking in the tongue" must be heard by the audience's native or there is an interpreter, and the number must be two or three peoples. Legalism or unbiblical practices must result from this particular issue. Finally, sanctification occurs not only through speaking in tongues but also through fully devoting one's life to the Holy Spirit.

Implication

The most important topic in the stage of progressive sanctification is the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier. The author acknowledges that the Holy Spirit sanctifies, but it should not be restricted to "filling," "refilling," or "speaking in tongues." The most crucial thing is that believers must entirely and completely devote their lives to be directed by the Holy Spirit, at the moment they are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not bound by time or place; He is immeasurable. So it is not a matter of space but of complete devotion to The Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The unsolved question becomes an advantage for the author since it allows the author to rethink Arminius' teaching because, in most cases, the author agrees with him, especially regarding sanctification. Academically, the author must construct new insight, which develops from the unresolved question. The author responds to Arminius' questioning about whether sanctification is perfect or not; sanctification is perfect or complete in the stages of initial and ultimate sanctification; sanctification is not complete yet in the stage of progressive sanctification.

References

- Arminius, J. (2002). *The Work of James Arminius* (Vol. 2). Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- Arrington, F. L. (2015). *Doktrin Kristen Perspektif Pentakosta* (T. B. Asmoro Santo, Trans.). ANDI.
- Davie, M. (Ed.). (2016). *New Dictionary of Theology, Historical, and Systematic* (2nd ed.). IPA Academic.
- Dieter, M. E., Hoekema, A. A., McQuilkin, J. R., Walvoord, J. F., & Horton, S. M. (1996). *Five Views on Sanctification* (S. N. Gundry, Ed.). Zondervan.
- Fadli, M. R. (2021). Memahami desain metode penelitian kualitatif. *HUMANIKA*, 21(1), 33–54.
<https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v21i1.38075>

- Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Zondervan.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). Sage Publisher.
- Muller, J. T. (1955). *Christian Dogmatics*. Corcondia Publishing.
- Renn, S. D. (Ed.). (2014). *Expository Dictionary of Bible Word: Words Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and the Greel Text* (6th ed.). Hendrickson Publisher.
- Rompis, H. M. (2017). *Doktrin Pentakosta Indonesia*. Penerbit GPDI Banten.
- Shedd, W. G. T. (2003). *Dogmatic Theology* (A. W. Gomes, Ed.). P&R Publisher.
- Thiessen, H. C. (1963). *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans.
- Tillich, P. (1988). *Systematic Theology* (Vol. 2). SCM Press.
- Wallace, D. B. (2000). *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*. Zondervan.