

HUMAN PERFECTION, TRANSFIGURATION AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Most people would agree that human perfection is unattainable. Indeed, theologians have typically expressed ambivalence about the possibility of human perfection. Yet, paradoxically, depictions of human perfection are widespread. In this volume, Robin Gill offers an interdisciplinary study of human perfection in contemporary secular culture. He demonstrates that the language of perfection is present in church memorials, popular depictions of sport, food, music and art, liturgy and philosophy. He contrasts these examples with the socio-psychological concept of ‘maladaptive perfectionism’, using commercial cosmetic surgery as an example, as well as the ‘adaptive perfectionism’ suggested in the lives of Henry Holland, Paul Farmer and, more ambivalently, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Gill then provides an in-depth analysis of New Testament and Septuagint usage of *teleios* and theological debates about the human perfection of Jesus. He argues that the Synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration offer a template for a Christian understanding of perfection that has important ecumenical implications within social ethics.

ROBIN GILL, Emeritus Professor of Applied Theology at the University of Kent, was the first holder of both the Michael Ramsey Chair at Kent and the William Leech Research Chair at Newcastle. His previous books include *Moral Passion and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) and *Sociological Theology* (3 volumes, 2012–13).

Praise for the author's previous book, *Moral Passion and Christian Ethics*

'This is an accessible and informed discussion which is distinguished by the comparative treatment of different faiths and a nuanced reflection on some of the most important moral exemplars of recent times. The vitality of the work confirms the continuing success of its host series.'

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Jean Porter, John A. O'Brien Professor of Theology,
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(continued after the index)

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ROBIN GILL

University of Kent



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I also acknowledge that some of the less foolish parts of this book (especially on Raimon Panikkar in Chapter 8) have been tested in the pages of the journal *Theology* [123.3, 204–8]. Biblical quotations come from the New Revised Standard Version.

Foolish or not, it has been especially enjoyable (for me at least) to discuss this endlessly fascinating topic with Jenny, my wife of many happy decades (*y una mas, si Dios quiere*), who is probably relieved that I will now have something different to obsess about. So my thanks and love, as ever, to her.