

Nothing could more clearly indicate the dangers which arise from a mixture of intellectual subtlety and dogmatic servitude, of crude materialism and baseless superstition.¹ "They discussed" says Petrarc, "about the secrets of nature as if they came from heaven," and many of their discussions about the mysteries of religion were, as Luther said (we will omit his epithet *diabolica*) "an art of litigating about idle and useless speculations."

Might they not have shrunk from such disputations with more becoming reverence if they had borne in mind the warning of St. Augustine, "Verius cogitatur Deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur?"² and still more his remark that "it is better to doubt things hidden than to dispute about things uncertain."³

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THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

No subject has received from theologians in this country more unworthy treatment than the Holiness of God. Nearly all writers on Systematic Theology⁴ have, without any proof and apparently without any consciousness of the difficulty of the subject, assumed a meaning for the word *Holy* when predicated of God; and have contented themselves with expounding their own arbitrary assump-

¹ See a fuller account of these discussions in Tribechovius. *De Doctoribus Scholasticis*.

² *De Trinitate*.

³ *De Gen. ad litt.*, viii. 5.

⁴ The above remarks do not apply to Mr. Cheyne (*Commentary on Isaiah*, chap. i. 4) and Dr. Robertson Smith (*Prophets of Israel*, page 224ff.), who have casually and intelligently referred to the subject. Their expositions, however, are evidently rather tentative than complete; and are apparently not quite satisfactory to the authors.

tions. And, although the meanings thus arbitrarily chosen differ greatly, nearly all of them are far removed from the very definite and remarkable idea conveyed by the same word when predicated of created objects.

By German writers the Holiness of God has been carefully investigated; with various results. Of these results, a good though brief account is given in the *Theologie des Alten Testaments* of Oehler, of which a second edition has just appeared; and a fuller account in Part II. of Baudissen's *Studien zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte*. This latter work I warmly commend as an exhaustive and scholarly discussion of the whole subject of Holiness. The favourite opinion now seems to be that advocated by Delitzsch in the second edition of Herzog's *Real-Encyclopædie*, in an article on the Holiness of God: "God is holy as He who is free from every kind of physical and ethical defect, and indeed free in the highest degree possible, free in ideal and archetypal manner." This definition is derived from the idea of separation (*i.e.* separation from evil) which Delitzsch considers to be the meaning of the root from which the word rendered *Holy* is derived. A somewhat different judgment is given by the same writer in his *Commentary on Isaiah* (vi. 3): "God¹ is in Himself the Holy One, *i.e.* the Separated, the Beyond, the Supermundane, absolute Light, undisturbed Pure and Perfect." Baudissen says, on page 130: "In the assertions of the Holiness of God we have found a narrower and wider meaning for the word *holy*. Jehovah is there-with described as He who is exalted above the Earthly (as Heavenly and therefore Lord of the Earthly) and specially as He who is exalted above the impurity of the Earth-World." These expositions have the fatal defect, as it seems to me, of bearing no relation to the many and

¹ Gott ist in sich der Heilige, d.i. der Abgeschiedene, Jenseitige, Ueberweltliche, schlechthin Lichte, truebungslos Reine und Vollkommene.

various holy objects of the Old Covenant. Moreover the variety of expositions suggested, and the evident indecision of some of the best scholars, mark the results hitherto obtained as unsatisfactory.

Under these circumstances, and specially with a view to call the attention of English theologians to this important subject, I shall in this article, with the caution which the difficulty of the subject demands, attempt another exposition of the Holiness of God.

In the New Testament the Holiness of God is mentioned only in John xvii. 11; Hebrews xii. 10; 1 Peter i. 15, 16 quoted from Leviticus xi. 44; Revelation iv. 8 repeated from Isaiah vi. 3, and vi. 10; and once (1 Peter iii. 15) we read "*Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.*" For the significance, therefore, of the divine attribute of holiness, we must turn to the Old Testament.

We notice also that in the Books of the Law the word *holy* is very rarely predicated of God, whereas it is predicated very frequently of a multitude of created objects, living and lifeless, e.g. Mount Sinai, the tabernacle and its vessels, the priests and their clothing and the anointing oil, the sacrifices, consecrated houses and fields, and the Sabbath. On the other hand, in the Book of Psalms and that of Isaiah these holy objects are almost out of sight; and the holiness of God frequently appears. This suggests that the idea of Holiness was first embodied in the holy men and things and times of the Old Covenant; and that from the conception of holiness thus made familiar was derived Israel's conception of the holiness of God. Or, whatever may have been the historic sequence, it is quite certain that the Israelites in the wilderness would derive their conception of holiness, not from the abstract holiness of God, but from the many concrete holy objects ever before their eyes. Indeed, even the great variety of the holy objects would impart definiteness to the conception of holi-

ness therein embodied ; for it makes more conspicuous the one quality common to all of them. And when this familiar though sacred word was solemnly assumed by God as a predicate of Himself; Israel would learn that behind and above the holy men and things and places and times was a Holy Person ; and that the holiness of these various created objects had its source in a definite element in the Nature of the Creator. Consequently, all research into the Holiness of God must begin with study of holiness as embodied in the sacred things of the Old Covenant ; and no exposition will satisfy us which does not account for the ceremonial holiness embodied in these sacred objects by tracing it to the Eternal Nature of God.

The derivation of the word before us suggested by Delitzsch, viz. from a root denoting separation, seems to me to be both reasonable in itself and to accord with the subsequent history and use of the word. But the original derivation is unimportant. For, of common words, the meaning as intended and as understood is determined not by etymology, but by the concrete objects thereby commonly designated and described. We notice, moreover, that the word *holy* is by no means a synonym of *separate*, inasmuch as it is never found except in the sense of *separated for God*. Practically the word *holy*, when applied to created objects, is equal to *holy for Jehovah*. In other words, the idea of destination for God is a part of the sense conveyed by the word.

The meaning of the word *holy* as an attribute or predicate of created objects is indisputable and quite clear. In the Mosaic Covenant God claimed various things for Himself, to be used only according to his command and to advance his purposes. All these, and nothing else, were called holy. And whatever God claimed for Himself, He claimed to be his entirely, and only his. Consequently his claim separated the holy objects from all others, and from

common life. As examples of this sense, compare Exodus xiii. 2: "*Sanctify for me every firstborn . . . among man and beast: it is mine.*" So Numbers iii. 13: "*Mine are all the firstborn. For in the day when I smote all the firstborn in Egypt I sanctified for myself every firstborn in Egypt, from man to beast. Mine shall they be.*" Also Deuteronomy vii. 6: "*A holy people thou art for Jehovah thy God: thee hath Jehovah thy God chosen to be his, for a people of special possession beyond all the peoples which are upon the face of the earth.*" And the very definite sense in which the word is used here is conveyed by multitudes of other passages in the four later Books of the Law, the Books of Chronicles and Nehemiah, and, though less frequently, in most other parts of the Old Testament.

In four passages in the Books of the Law, Leviticus xi. 44, xix. 2, xx. 26, xxi. 8, God declares solemnly that He is Himself holy; and on the ground of his own holiness commands the people to sanctify themselves and to be holy. In two of these passages the holiness of God is given as a reason for abstaining from unclean food; a third has reference to the holiness of the priests; and another is a warning to honour parents, to keep the Sabbath, and to turn from idolatry. Again, in Leviticus x. 3 God declares, "*In those who are near to me I will be sanctified and in the presence of all the people I will be glorified.*" Similarly Numbers xx. 12, xxvii. 14; Deuteronomy xxxii. 51. The whole context makes it quite certain that in these passages the word *holy* is designed to convey the same idea as in the hundreds of passages surrounding them in which it is predicated of men and things. In order, therefore, to understand the word as used in these passages, we must ask, What do the sacred things of the Mosaic covenant teach us about God? what definite element in his nature do they reveal?

The answer is not far to seek. Moses, Aaron, and Israel,

as they encamped around the Sacred Tent, had thoughts of God very different from their thoughts in earlier days. He was now the Great Being who had claimed from Aaron a peculiar and exclusive and lifelong service. This claim must have created an era in Aaron's conception of God. By predicating of Himself the word *holy* already applied to the objects claimed for Himself, God announced that this claim was no mere casual event in sacred history, but was an outflow and expression of his own inmost Nature, of a definite element in God Himself. God was now to Israel the God of the Altar, the Tabernacle, the Priesthood, the Sacrifices, and the Sabbath. The holiness of God is that element of his Nature of which these were visible exponents.

The real significance of the Levitical holiness, and of the divine attribute therein revealed, becomes still more evident in the New Testament. There the word *holy* is comparatively rare, except in two connexions, each of them very frequent, namely, as a distinctive attribute of the Spirit of God, and as the common designation of all believers without consideration of the degree of their spiritual life. This latter use of the word is full of interest. By calling themselves *holy*, the early Christians expressed their confidence that God had claimed them to be exclusively his own, in order that henceforth He might be the one aim of their every purpose and effort. Consequently, in the New Testament, the holy objects of the Mosaic ritual are patterns in symbolic outline of the Christian life. The servants of Christ are a temple, a priesthood; and their bodies a living sacrifice. And the significance of this symbolic language, and indeed the purpose for which the symbols were instituted of old, are expounded in many passages (e.g. 2 Corinthians v. 15) in which we are taught that God designs us to live a life of which He is the constant aim. As thus claimed by God, all Christians are holy. Unfaithfulness in them is sacrilege, robbery of God.

We notice now that the important teaching just referred to, as embodied in the word *holy*, conveys to us a new and very solemn conception of God. As we bow to God, we think of Him as the Great Being who has claimed us and all we have and are to be exclusively his own. And, when we read that He who (1 Corinthians i. 2) has sanctified us in Christ is Himself holy, we learn that this claim flows from his inmost Nature, that in virtue of his own mode of existence He can do no other than claim to be the sole possessor of whatever He has created, and the sole aim of the entire activity of all his intelligent creatures. Just so, creation is an outflow of the inmost Nature of God; for He can do no other than create. That all things are both from Him and for Him, is absolute and eternal truth. He is the Beginning and the End.

In order to reveal to men this element of his Nature, God claimed for Himself, in the infancy of our race, the various holy objects of the old Covenant. This claim was embodied in the word *holy*. And this word God assumed as a description of Himself, thus making the sacred objects exponents of Himself. In the New Covenant, God claims in Christ that all his servants render to Him their body, soul, and spirit, their possessions and powers, to be used for Him only as the one aim of their entire being. And, noting that this claim is no mere incident in the divine procedure, but is a revelation of God Himself, in a few passages God is Himself called holy.

With this exposition of the holiness of God, agrees well the derivation of the word *holy* as given by Delitzsch and others. A word must be found to mark out certain objects as claimed by God for Himself only. Now one of the first thoughts of the ordinary Israelite about these objects would be that he could not touch them. God's claim had separated them from him, and from the many objects not thus claimed which the Israelite might touch and use for him-

self. A word was at hand denoting separation. This word was appropriated to the new conception called up by God's claim. And so powerful was this conception that it at once monopolized completely the word allotted to it. Thus a word denoting originally mere separation was used only to convey the sense of separation for God. The added conception, viz. destination for God, became stronger than the original one, viz. separation from men and from common use. Consequently the word *holy* was used of whatever stood in special relation to God, even when the idea of separation was hardly perceptible. And, since the divine claim embodied in the word had its origin in God, the word *holy* was predicated of Him also.

This exposition agrees with all the passages in which we read of the holiness of God. Well might Moses sing in Exodus xv. 11, "*Who is like thee among the gods, Jehovah? Who like thee, glorious in holiness?*" For God's claim to the absolute devotion of his people, revealed in his claim to the sacred things of the Old Covenant, surpasses infinitely every claim ever put forth for the gods of heathendom; and thus reveals the surpassing majesty of God. And the wilderness, where God solemnly announced this claim and thus revealed Himself to Israel, was fitly called in Verse 13 "*the abode of thy holiness.*"

This divine claim is the most solemn confirmation possible of the various prescriptions of the Levitical law. For He who claimed Israel for his own might command what He would. Thus we read in Leviticus xx. 24-26, "*I am Jehovah your God which have separated you from the peoples. And ye shall separate between cattle, the clean from the unclean, and between fowl, the unclean from the clean, that ye make not your souls abominable with cattle and with fowl and with all that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated that ye may make it unclean. And ye shall be holy for me. For holy am I, Jehovah. And I have separ-*

ated you from the peoples that ye may be mine." When God manifested, by word or act, the strictness of his claim, He was said to be sanctified, as in Leviticus x. 3, in reference to Nadab and Abihu. When men yielded to God the devotion He claimed, that is, when in the subjective world of their own inner and outer life they put Him in the unique place of honour as their Owner and Master, they were said to sanctify God. So Deuteronomy xxxii. 51; Numbers xxvii. 14, "*Because ye sanctified me not in the midst of Israel.*"

Very conspicuous in the Book of Isaiah, and by an interesting coincidence found recorded in 2 Kings xix. 22 as spoken by Isaiah, is the phrase *The Holy One of Israel*. The same phrase is found in Psalm lxxi. 22, lxxviii. 41, lxxxix. 18; Jeremiah l. 29, li. 5. It is very interesting as giving to the Holiness of God a special relation, viz. to Israel; just as the frequent phrase *holy for Jehovah* gives to the holiness of the tabernacle and priests and sacrifices a special relation, viz. to God. This mutual relation of God to Israel and of Israel to God rested on God's claim that Israel should be specially his, and this claim implied that Jehovah would in a special sense be the God of Israel. So Exodus xxix. 44, 45, "*And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar: and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify to act as priests to Me. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel: and I will be to them a God.*"

The original sense (if the derivation suggested above be correct) of separation is frequently perceptible in the word *holy* even when predicated of God. For, that God claims the absolute ownership of all his servants, reveals the infinite difference between Him and even the greatest of his creatures. We notice also that God's claim not only separated the claimed objects from, but raised them above, the men and things of common life. This idea of exaltation is

at once suggested by the Holiness of God. God's claim raises Him infinitely above the loftiest on earth. Each of the collateral ideas, viz. separation and exaltation, is prominent in the frequent phrase *his Name of Holiness*: Psalm ciii. 1, cv. 3, cvi. 47; and especially Ezekiel xxxvi. 20-23, "*They profaned my name of Holiness. . . . I took pity upon my name of Holiness. . . . And I will sanctify my great name which was profaned among the nations.*"

The comparative rarity of holiness in the New Testament as a predicate of God is in part compensated, and thus accounted for, by its frequency as the common designation of the people of God, and as a distinctive attribute of the Spirit of God. For the idea of holiness is always the same, in whatever objects it is embodied. Moreover, in the New Testament, the Holiness of God gives place to the revelation, on the cross of Christ, of the Love of God. Love occupies a unique place as being itself the Essence of God. From this flow all other moral attributes of God. Because He loves us, He claims our absolute devotion. For, without an aim, life is poor and worthless. And all human aims are vain. Therefore, in order to ennoble even the humblest of his servants, God has in infinite love given Himself to be their constant aim, that thus they may daily rise towards God. The full revelation of the Love of God, which is the inmost centre of his Being, overshadows in the New Testament the subordinate divine attribute of Holiness.

The foregoing exposition has the advantage of retaining for the very conspicuous word *holy*, which is never found except in a religious sense, always the same idea, viz. the very definite idea which belongs to it in the Mosaic ritual; and traces this idea to the Nature of God. Moreover it presents to us, as embodied in this word, an indisputable element in the Nature of God, one not embodied in any other word predicated of Him, and attaches to the phrase

Holiness of God a sense quite different from that conveyed by any other word predicated of Him.

In a few passages the word *holy* is predicated of the Son of God. Since in these passages the Son is clearly distinguished from the Father, we think of Him as holy in the sense that of the Incarnate Son every thought and word and act had for its aim the accomplishment of the purposes of God. And this Christ frequently declared. So John iv. 34, "*It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to complete his work.*" Chapter v. 19: "*The Son cannot do anything of himself except what he sees the Father doing.*" Verse 30: "*I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me.*" Chapter vi. 38: "*I have come down from Heaven not that I may do my own will but the will of him that sent me.*" Chapter xvii. 4: "*I have glorified thee on the earth, having completed the work which thou gavest me to do.*" Similarly, Romans vi. 10: "*The life which he liveth he liveth for God.*" 1 Corinthians iii. 23: "*Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's*". In virtue of this absolute devotion to God, the Saviour to be born was foretold (Luke i. 35) by the angel as *The Holy Thing*; the neuter form leaving out of sight all except that He would be an embodiment of holiness. Both by his disciples (John vi. 69) and by evil spirits (Mark i. 24) He was called *The Holy One of God*, a phrase very similar to *Holy for Jehovah* in the Old Testament. He is (Acts iii. 14; iv. 27) *the holy and just One, the holy servant of God*. Since the aim of the mission of the Son was God's purpose to save the world, the Son declares that *the Father sanctified Him and sent Him into the world*.

In 1 Peter iii. 15, an Epistle full of Old Testament thought, and containing express mention of the Mosaic ritual in its spiritual significance, we read "*Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.*" Here the distinction between the Father and the Son is out of sight. Consequently, in this

passage the holiness to be given to the Son is not distinguishable from the holiness claimed (*e.g.* Leviticus xxii. 32) by the Father. We are bidden to give to Christ in our heart of hearts the place of honour which belongs to our absolute Proprietor and Master. This exhortation is little or nothing less than an assertion that Christ is divine.

The word holy is constantly used as a distinguishing attribute of the Spirit of God. For of Him every impulse is towards God and towards the realisation of his purpose. All other influences lead away from Him. Therefore, of all inward motive principles, He alone is absolutely *the Holy Spirit*.

It may be objected that the above exposition gives to the word *holy*, when predicated of God, a sense different from that conveyed by it when predicated of men and things, and even when predicated of the Son and the Spirit. But in all cases the central idea conveyed is the same, viz. God's claim to the sole use for his own purposes of whatever exists, and to be the one aim of all intelligent beings. The relation of this one idea to the subjects of which the word *holy* is predicated differs only as these subjects themselves differ; *i.e.* as God differs from men, and men from things, and things from periods of time, and as the Father differs from the Son and from the Spirit, or, in short, as the Creator differs from the creature, the Supreme from the subordinate. The precise relation of the one idea to the various objects in which it is embodied, must be determined in each case by the nature of the object and by the general context. The idea of holiness, as expounded above, is in all cases the same.

The foregoing suggestions I now leave for the judgment of any who may think them worthy of their attention. All will admit that the subject demands, and will well repay, careful study. And most of my readers will join me in condemning the unproved assertions which in many English

works on theology have usurped the place of scholarly research. They will also, I think, admit that all investigation into this subject must, in the main, follow the lines marked out in this article.

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BRIEF NOTICES.

OUR space for "brief notices" grows so scanty that our notices must of necessity be briefer than ever. For the present we can only mention the issues of a single firm.

Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton have recently published some excellent books, among which we give the first place to *THE CITY OF GOD*, by *Dr. Fairbairn*. It contains some of the best work he has yet given to the world, and includes many "discussions" on topics of the profoundest interest to all who take part in the strife between modern Scepticism and Religion. The only drawback to the book is that the author has thrown into it, apparently as make-weights, several occasional pieces of inferior worth to the bulk of its contents; and so, instead of adding to, has detracted from its weight. *A STUDY OF ORIGINS*, by *Dr. De Pressensé*, and translated by Annie Harwood Holmden, is a serious contribution to a solution of the main problems of Knowledge, of Being, and of Duty. It is marked by a sobriety and solidity of thought not too common with French theologians, and by a clearness and vivacity of expression far too uncommon with their English *confrères*. It would be a capital book to put into the hands of young men whose religious difficulties are of a metaphysical kind. In *A POPULAR INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT*, *Dr. J. Rawson Lumby* has compiled a useful manual, admirably adapted to the wants of intelligent laymen who wish to acquaint themselves with the structure, history, and interdependence of the New Testament Scriptures.

The book on the Parables of our Lord has yet to be written. Archbishop Trench's well-known work is valuable more especially for its graceful and poetic treatment of their literary aspects and qualities; his interpretation of their contents being deflected by his ecclesiastical prepossessions and undue deference to the judgment of the Fathers, and a little obscured by his studied and elaborate