

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

speech or deed to remove offences from between brethren, to bring together those who have been long separated, to widen the bonds of fellowship in Christ; blessed the man who shall see the day when the walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt, and the Church of God be as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Until that day come, let us pray for the peace of Christendom, and let every one prosper who loveth the Church of Christ.

JOHN WATSON.

THE NATURE OF HOLINESS.

THE life of holiness is both an essentially separate and an essentially social life. Inwardly it is a life of separateness: outwardly, a life of fellowship. Contradictory as these two qualities, separateness and fellowship, may seem, both are indispensable to holiness. If either be lacking to our holiness, its nature is not complete and full.

The failure to perceive this essential, however seemingly contradictory, dualism in the nature of holiness has been the source of innumerable injuries to the Christian faith. It has been the cause of monasticism on the one hand, and of religious worldliness on the other. The monk is separate without being social, the religious worldling is social without being separate. Neither of them is completely Christian. Each is deficient in one of the cardinal properties of holiness. Both, as we shall afterwards see, are partially disloyal to the gospel of the Incarnation, which is the gospel of true holiness.

The Bible is the greatest of all authorities upon holiness. And when we inquire of the Bible concerning the nature of the holiness, whether of persons or things, we find that

one of its chief characteristics is separateness. To sanctify means to separate. The sanctification of the tabernacle, of the firstborn, of the Sabbath Day, of the priestly garments, signified their separation from common and profane uses, and their dedication to the service of God. Similarly with holy persons. The Bible expects them to be distinct. It describes the children of the Lord as an elect race, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a people marked out for God's own possession. The people for whom our Saviour Christ gave Himself are said to be a peculiar people.¹ Sanctified things and sanctified persons are, therefore, in the Scriptural sense of the terms, persons and things set apart. No person and no thing is regarded in the Bible as holy unless fenced off from ordinary persons and ordinary things. Without separation there can be no sanctification. Distinctiveness is an indispensable quality of holiness.

Upon further inquiry from the Bible, we find that this necessary distinctiveness is of a quite remarkable character. It is a distinctiveness not of form and appearance so much as of purpose and object. The ground about the Burning Bush, for example, was not externally different from that of the neighbouring wilderness. The incense of Moses and Aaron was chemically similar to that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The ark of God was made of ordinary shittim wood, and overlaid with ordinary gold. The Sabbath, regarded astronomically, was not unlike any other day of the week. The stones of the temple were cut from common quarries, and set like the stones of other buildings. In outward appearance hardly any of these things were distinct or peculiar. Yet were they separate, sanctified, holy. God told Moses that the ground about the Burning Bush was holy ground. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were consumed for burning their incense before the Lord. Uzzah

¹ Deut. xiv. 2; 1 Pet. ii. 9; Tit. ii. 14.

was smitten to death for putting out his hand to steady the Ark. The Sabbath was a kind of sacramental sign between Jehovah and Israel. And our Lord's anger was specially kindled against those who treated the temple courts as a market place; or, in their irreverence, were forgetful that the temple was the heavenly Father's house, the house of prayer.¹

Under the Jewish dispensation, therefore, we find that the holiness of places, and institutions, and things, was a holiness whose distinctive separation consisted not in any peculiarity of appearance, but in special dedication to a spiritual purpose. Looking from without upon things sanctified, very little difference could be discerned between them and things unsanctified — frequently, indeed, no difference at all. Their separation unto holiness was only recognisable through the realization of the peculiar purposes for which they were set apart.

A similar combination of apparent sameness, with actual difference, is manifest in the holiness of Christian institutions and Christian ordinances. The Christian Sunday, in the reckoning of an almanack, counts only as any other day. The Christian Bible is printed from ordinary type, and on a library shelf looks much the same as other books. The waters of Holy Baptism are common waters. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are made from ordinary flour and ordinary grapes. Many of the early Christian churches were fashioned on the pattern of the Pagan basilicas. Yet everybody knows that the Christian Sunday is a peculiar day—the day of the creation of light, the day of our Redeemer's resurrection, the day of the great descent of the Holy Ghost, the day on which multitudes of persons discover a way of special access to God through the avenues of worship. The Bible, too, as all

¹ Exod. iii. 5; Num. xvi.; 1 Chron. xiii. 10, 11; Isa. lviii. 13 Matt. xxi. 12; John ii. 15.

true spiritual students find, stands absolutely by itself in its capacity for inspiration and exalting power. And large numbers of sober-minded, fact-loving persons (persons in no degree addicted to the fancies of superstition) have testified that the waters of Baptism and the foods of the Communion have been the means of a very real cleansing and a very real strengthening of their souls.

And what is true of holy institutions, and holy places, and holy things, is true also of holy persons. In one signal property, indeed, the holiness of persons is fundamentally different from the holiness of things. Holy things are not conscious of their separation unto holiness. Holy persons, on the contrary, are deeply conscious of it: conscious of it in themselves, conscious of it before God. But their consciousness of it is not, of necessity, displayed by any seclusive sign or any professional mark conspicuous to others. Their hallowing is essentially an inward hallowing. It is not a separation of dress, or vocation, or traditional rule; but of aim, and character, and life. The inward spirit, and not the outward profession, is one chief test of true holiness.

And if inward separation, inward hallowing, be one chief test of genuine holiness, another test, equally important, is fellowship. Social commingling is as necessary a part of the nature of true holiness as spiritual separation. This is one of the keynotes of our Lord's great valedictory prayer for His disciples. "Father, take them not out of the world, but keep them from its evil."¹ The social character of our Lord's life is one of its most remarkable features. He came "eating and drinking."² By far the larger part of His life was spent in His village home, not improbably at work at His foster-father's trade. The common taunt levelled against Him was that He "was a carpenter."³ His first great manifestation of His Divinity

¹ John xvii. 15.

² Matt. xi. 19.

³ Matt. xiii. 55.

was at a marriage feast. His first miracle was a social miracle. His periods of seclusion were rare and brief. At times, indeed, He went to a desert place to rest awhile, or withdrew to a mountain to pray, or was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness for some great wrestling with the Evil One; but He was soon back again healing the sick, casting out devils, preaching to the poor.¹ He wore no phylacteries or conspicuous clothing. He did not stand apart at the corners of the streets to pray. He kept His fastings secretly. When He did some kindly act, He "would have no man know it."² It is true that "He could not be hid."³ But whatever notice He attracted was involuntary. He never wrought a single sign to draw attention to Himself. His light shone to His Father's glory. His works testified of Him. The great witness of His holiness was His work for men, and among men. He does not seem to have been distinguished by any mark of outward custom or appearance. He was altogether separate from the world inwardly. But His inward separation was principally testified by the tremendous energy of His social life; His mingling with the people for the people's good.

Sometimes, indeed, holy persons do wear a distinctive dress, and restrict themselves to a distinctive diet. John the Baptist was one of this class. But it should be noted that even the Baptist's life was not a wholly secluded, far less a self-centred life. He prepared the way of the Lord by his activities. He preached, he baptized, he thundered against the ceremonial sanctities of the Pharisees, and the indolent scepticism of the Sadducees. He rebuked the immoralities of those in high places. He was a sublime social reformer. He forbade the tax-gatherers to commit injustice. He reproached the Roman soldiers for their arrogance, their false swearing, and their dis-

¹ Mark vi. 31; Luke vi. 12; Matt. xi. 5; Matt. iv. 1. ² Matt. iv. 30.

³ Mark vii. 24.

content.¹ Though his own raiment was of camel's hair, and his food locusts and wild honey, yet he made the great proclamation that the true test of repentance is its fruit, its work for God in the world. He majestically predicted that the day was coming when hereditary religious privileges, caste religions of all kinds, would be as the stones of a common house; and all flesh should see the salvation of God. He never publicly alluded to his hair shirt or his desert food. It nowhere appears that he attached any special importance to them. They were a reminiscence, a visible memorial, of the great Elijah; a token of the revival of the spirit of Elijah among men—a spirit of religious reformation founded on the rock of holy righteousness. The important element in the mission both of Elijah and the Baptist was not the roughness of their raiment, or the simplicity of their diet; but the purification of public morals, and the deepening before God of man's personal life. Neither Elijah nor the Baptist founded an order. Neither of them imposed a code of regulations concerning garb or food upon their followers. Ascetics themselves, they did not enjoin asceticism on others. The sternness of Elijah received a strong rebuke when the great revelation was made to him that the Divine Presence was not in earthquake, or fire, but in the still small voices which gently whisper to men.² The austere Baptist, too, although declared to be the greatest of those hitherto born of woman, was yet also declared less than the least in the kingdom of Heaven.³ Thus it is clear that the Bible assigns no special merit to the asceticism either of the Old Testament or the New Testament Elijah. It is what these holy men did and taught for God amongst their fellows upon which the Bible lays stress; not upon their singular austerities of diet and dress. The important

¹ Luke iii. 7-14.

² 1 Kings xix. 12.

³ Matt. xi. 11.

events in their history are the social events; the purification of public worship as on Mount Carmel, the miracle wrought to restore the broken happiness of a death-stricken home, the vengeance predicted upon the murderous theft of Naboth's vineyard, the vindication of the purity of married life in defence of which the Baptist died a martyr's death.¹

It was the social element in the work of both Elijah and the Baptist which preserved their severities from deteriorating into selfishness. Their history proves, as the history of the Church has subsequently proved in numerous instances, that asceticism is not necessarily destructive of holiness. It proves that even asceticism, when energized by the social impulse, is quite compatible with holiness. At the same time it must be confessed that the Bible nowhere recognises in asceticism the highest type of holiness. Our Lord Himself, as we have already seen, was no ascetic; neither were any of His Apostles. St. Peter was a married man; so probably was St. John.² The great majority of the Apostles were men of a social and domestic type. Even St. Paul's preference for the celibate life was not grounded on any assumption of its spiritual superiority above the married life, but solely upon considerations of utility.³ He preferred to be free from all household cares that he might devote himself the more fully to the social service of Christianity. Similarly he praised the self-sacrifice of women who abstained from marriage in order that they might give themselves up wholly to work for the Lord. It is in this sense only, the greater freedom for work, that St. Paul affirms the unmarried life, whether of women or men, to be preferable to the married life. And even to this restricted sense he is most careful to add, evidently feeling that the matter was non-essential, "I speak this by permission, and

¹ 1 Kings xvii., xviii., xxi.; Matt. xiv. 4.

² Matt. viii. 14; John xix. 27.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

not of commandment.”¹ All that St. Paul maintains concerning celibacy is that, in his judgment, the single life may be more useful in the service of Christ; more useful, particularly for mission work, than the married life. He nowhere ascribes to it greater sanctity. Nor does he confuse the celibate with the secluded life. His celibates are to devote themselves to the social service of the Church, to carry its message to the world, to minister in offices of charity and goodwill to men. The only justification he gives for celibacy is its greater opportunities for social work. No one knew better than St. Paul the tremendous perils which beset celibacy when sundered from the all-absorbing activities of work for Christ.² The only salvation of celibacy is work, and particularly social work for God. Without this social energy celibacy is neither a safe nor a completely holy life. For the highest type of all holiness is the type of Christ and His Apostles; and their holiness was both separate and social—inwardly separate towards God and outwardly social towards men.

We may further observe that the separateness inherent in holiness is not separateness for its own sake. Holiness endures separation from others for the sake of others. Its separateness is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. That end is the social good. If separateness does not result in social blessing, then, in the judgment of holiness, it is a failure. This is true, not only of Christian people, but of Christian institutions and Christian ordinances also. Sunday, for example, is not separate from other days for the mere sake of separateness. It is separate in order that it may leaven all other days with its hallowing influence. Sunday is a failure unless it makes the whole week Christian. So, too, with every institution of a true, holy sort. Its holiness is hidden like leaven in meal; but it leavens the whole lump in which it

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 6.

² 1 Cor. vii. 2-9; Col. ii. 23.

is. One sure test of the holiness of the Catholic Church is its capacity to hallow the world at large, to set up a church in every house and a chapel in every heart. No Church is holy, however secluded and separate, which is not hard at work in the world to hallow the world. Our Bible reading, too, is not holy reading if it is mere separate reading—reading out of all touch and relation with our other reading. If our Bible reading does not hallow all our reading, it is not successful spiritual reading. Studied aright, the Book of God teaches us to find God in all our books. It teaches us also to care little for books in which God may not be found, if not in name, yet in the hidden truths, whether of fiction or fact, of poetry or prose.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this union of inward separateness and social service in holy ordinances more clearly exemplified than in the two great Christian sacraments. Holy Baptism is a personal regeneration, an inward washing and illumination; yet is it also an outward grafting, a visible incorporation, into the body of Christ's Church. Holy Communion is a personal partaking, by faith, of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, an inward strengthening and refreshing of the individual soul; yet is it also an external pledge of universal Christian brotherhood, a visible sign and seal of the spiritual fellowship of all the members of Christ's Sacramental Society. "We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread."¹ The blessings of the Sacraments, therefore, are both individual and social blessings; they separate us unto God, and they unite us with each other. But they do more than this. They are the sacraments of our redemption, and our redemption largely depends on our efforts to rescue others. We lose ourselves if we seek only to save ourselves. We save ourselves if we lose all thought of ourselves in seeking to save others. Thus the Sacraments

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17.

of our redemption are Sacraments which pledge us to work for others—for their rescue, their reformation, their growth in righteousness towards God. Sacramental separation thus implies sacramental service. It is separation as the seed of service, and service as the fruit of separation.

The history of the Christian Church bears melancholy witness to the serious injury often caused by the forgetting or ignoring of this necessity of social service as the complement of inward hallowing to the perfection of the holy life. Holiness has been too much regarded as a separate, an exclusive life, a withdrawing from the world rather than a leavening of the world, a fencing off of the sacred from the secular instead of a permeation of the secular by the sacred. It is this error which has so often debased holiness into a matter of meat and drink, of garb and rule, of phrases and catchwords. This error lies at the root of all forms of Manicheism, whether primitive, mediæval, or modern. Setting out from opposite extremities, Monasticism and Calvinism meet in the embrace of this error ; for both seek to constitute a separate order of the elect within the social Church of the baptized. Upon the sands of this error is built the false glorification of virginity and the celibate life, as a state spiritually better than that of the married life. It is this error which has made an idol of the Bible, thus sadly bereaving it of its grand quickening power, and has perverted Sunday into a mechanical observance, instead of enthroning it as one of God's greatest spiritual gifts to mankind. It is this error which has led to the common dread of the Holy Communion, and the disastrous professionalism of some of the clergy. Through the adoption of this error the clergy have tended to become a caste, and the laity have forgotten their own ministry. In sum, whatever separates religion from common life is not true holiness. The nature of holiness is as essentially social in its relation to everyday life as it is essentially

separate in its inward sanctity. Unless we cultivate the social qualities of our holiness, our religion dwindles into a mere selfish, personal profession, and ceases to be a redeeming power in the world.

All such exclusive separation of the Church from the world, of the religious from the daily life of men, manifestly runs clean contrary to the gospel of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is no phantom creed; of all realities it is among the most searchingly real. Yet what does the Incarnation mean? What message does It deliver to mankind? Surely one part of its meaning and its message is the social character of holiness, the inter-penetration of the human by the Divine, the sanctification of things visible and common by the eternal and invisible God. At the Incarnation the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; at the Incarnation the eternal God did not abhor the womb of woman, but became partaker of His own created human nature. When He came to the world, He came, as a man comes to his own possessions, to His own home.¹ He came to show that the world was His, that man and man's destiny were His, and not the devil's. At the Incarnation the All-Holy descended into the material sphere, the Heavenly entered into the earthly. The Incarnation was the consecration of the human body, and the hallowing of all bodily necessities and bodily appetites. By the Incarnation all things secular are clearly intended to be made sacred, and all things human are intended to partake of a divine spirit. The only thing from which Christ sundered Himself was sin. Inwardly separate unto God, He was both inwardly and outwardly separate from sin; though for us He was made sin, in Him was no sin.² The only respect in which He kept aloof from the world, was sternly anti-social towards it, was its sinfulness. In all other respects His most holy life was a social life. He

¹ John i. 11 : *εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθε*.

² 2 Cor. v. 21.

was a Man amongst men, a Workman amongst workmen, a Guest among guests. He frequented both public feasts and private entertainments; He showed fellowship both with the joys and the sorrows of men. Some of his parables evince a striking familiarity with social affairs. He was a great lover of children and young men. His disciples were His friends. He went about doing good. He did not disdain to sit talking with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. To her He vouchsafed one of His world-shaking revelations.¹ The home at Bethany—well ordered by the industry of Martha, sweetened by the pensiveness of Mary, warmed by the dear companionship of Lazarus—was one of His favourite resorts. Even when He instituted and ordained His two holy Sacraments He made them, as we have seen, social Sacraments. After His resurrection the Incarnate Lord was still social. Though He no longer allowed His friends to touch Him familiarly, yet He ate and drank and conversed with them.² It was while in the act of social intercourse with His disciples that He was taken up into heaven.³ The founding of His Church on the Day of Pentecost was the grandest of all the social enterprises and social reforms ever witnessed by the world. The Church was called out from the world that it might go forth into the world to save and bless the world. Nothing was ever said or done by our Incarnate Lord which favours the notion of the special sanctity of isolation, or asceticism, or exclusiveness. The Incarnation was the glad herald to humanity of the social life, the social power, the social salvation of holiness.

Still, while we are bound to remember the social character of true holiness, as unfolded throughout the Bible and made especially manifest by the Incarnation, we are bound to remember also the equally important fact that holiness is

¹ John iv. 21-24.

² John xx. 17, xxi. 12.

³ Acts i. 7-10.

essentially separate. We cannot be truly holy unless we are separate, any more than we can be completely holy without being social. In the Scriptures oil is a common figure of holiness.¹ But oil will not mix with any matter not akin to itself. Oil poured upon troubled waters will calm, but will not mix with, them. So with the oil of holiness in the world. Its presence calms, and heals, and beautifies worldly things; but it does not mix with them; it *cannot* mix with them. The spirit of holiness is contrary to the world-spirit. The world-spirit is a time-spirit. It walks by sight, and lives by sense. It dwells among things seen. It seeks material rewards. But the spirit of holiness is an altogether different spirit. Its vision pierces the walls of sense, and overleaps the limits of time. It is an eternal spirit. It sees Him who is invisible. Its hopes are anchored within the veil. Purity is its great passion. It dwells among things unseen. Its crown is incorruptible and never fadeth away. Between the world-spirit and the spirit of holiness, therefore, there can be no fellowship, no communion, no concord, no agreement. They are anti-pathetic, antagonistic spirits—spirits in truceless enmity with each other. Peace between them is impossible. All true disciples of the holy Saviour are not only separate from sin; they are separate also from worldliness. Inward and absolute separateness from the world is as integral to the nature of holiness as outward social work in the world. The sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty must, of necessity, be separate; else they cannot be holy.²

Outwardly, as we have seen, the surface of holy and worldly lives may appear, in many respects, similar to each other. Holy persons move, and speak, and act in the world much as do other persons in all innocent pleasures, and honest employments, and pure pursuits, and guileless mirth; but inwardly their lives are entirely different—different in

¹ Ps. civ. 15, cix. 18.

² 2 Cor. vi. 14-18.

character, and motive, and aim, and result. The holy life is a life hid with Christ in God.¹ It is a life gradually detaching itself more and more from things seen and temporal, and finding its fulness more and more abundantly in things unseen and eternal.

Our age seems largely to have overlooked this essential dualism of the nature of holiness. On the one hand it has applauded superstitious severity and external isolation to the undervaluing of social sanctity. On the other hand, with its Christian Socialism, its Labour Churches, its Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, its enthusiasm for Ceremonial, its energy for clubs and games and the whole secular side of life, it is deluding itself with the fond imagination that the world may be won to Christ by outward and worldly methods. But whatever value we may assign to these things as adjuncts to the Gospel, as its substitutes they are altogether a delusion. The world can only be won for Christ by Christ's own methods. He was in the world; true. But he was of the world—never. In all things pure, and just, and good the Christian must conform to worldly tastes and habits and pursuits; only by so conforming can he be loyal to the Incarnation; but if inwardly the Christian conform to the world-spirit (the spirit of sight and time and sense), then will the world conquer him, not he the world. If, like our Lord, we go into the world to win it, then too, like Him, we must often be alone with God in quiet places for quiet times of quiet communion. The more social our religion is outwardly, the greater is the need for systematic and determined devotion to the heavenly task of the inward hallowing. "The mastery of the world," writes Professor Hort, "depends on inner separation from it: a separation transcending the outer commingling."² Without this inner separation all work for Christ is vain, and all growth in holiness impos-

¹ Col. iii. 3.

² *The Way, the Truth, the Life*, p. 61.

sible. The inner separation is the spiritual wellspring of the social energy of holiness; and if the springs be not constantly replenished, the streams will inevitably run dry.

JOHN W. DIGGLE.

*HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO THE CORINTHIANS.*

XXII. THE CORINTHIAN VIEW REGARDING MARRIAGE.

IN the preceding section we take the view that the Corinthians had proposed to Paul the question whether the right principle of life was that all persons ought to marry. We must now ask what was their intention in putting this question.

The answer has already been distinctly indicated in the reasoning which led up to the determination of the question which they proposed to the Apostle. The letter of the Corinthians was (as we have seen already at various points) a decidedly ambitious performance. They discussed, with much philosophic acumen and with strong reforming zeal, the nature of society, the character of man, the relation of man to God, and other similar topics, and they were well satisfied with the letter which embodied their opinions. It was (as they felt) able, religious, and on a lofty plane of morality. They were eager to regenerate and reform society, and they were satisfied that they knew how to do so. The questions which they put to Paul on this subject were calculated to show clearly what answer must, in their opinion, be given to them.

In no part of the Roman Empire was there current at that time any idea of the advisability and the superior purity of monasticism and the permanent separation of the sexes. The Corinthians were entirely under the influence of prevailing views, and were as firmly persuaded