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911TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
HELD IN THE CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1,
ON MONDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 1952.
Rev. S. C. THEXTON, M.TH., in the Chair.

SANCTITY: ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

By the Rev. W. E. SANGSTER, M.A., Ph.D.

SYNOPSIS

The greatness of the saint is unlike all other greatness. Sublime goodness has fascinated discerning men and women through all time. What is the uniqueness of the saint? Can the origin and development of sanctity be traced through the centuries?

The paper is an attempt to do that. It recognizes sanctity in other world religions but concentrates (in the latter part of the paper) on its development in Judaism and Christianity. The first part of the paper is an attempt to analyse man's early apprehension of the Divine (and to isolate in it the "germ" of the holy) before the emergence of the great World Faiths. It puts stress upon the contribution of the non-rational to man's awareness of God.

The development of the idea of the holy is rapidly traced through the Old Testament, and an emphasis is placed upon the immense importance of God's revelation in Isaiah, wherein the ethical character of the divine holiness is clearly enunciated. The differences in the New Testament, subsequent to the gift of the Holy Spirit, are touched upon, and the "double standard" in morality, which grew up in the Church after the canon was closed, is indicated.

The paper closes with a series of questions which show the lines along which the author believes that further thinking on this subject should be done.

SANCTITY is a kind of greatness unlike all other. The great statesman, the great writer, the great soldier may be far above us but he remains of our world. The great saint fills us with awe and seems almost a visitor from another sphere. Mystery and fascination clothe the thought of him in our mind.

The mystery derives from some dim awareness that we have of his commerce with another world. He appears to be "the pilgrim of an inward odyssey." He treats material things (for which we long and to which we cling) as no more important than the furniture of an inn.

The fascination derives from some strange conviction we cannot escape that we also could be—and *should* be—what he has become: that, unlike other kinds of greatness, this was within our grasp and that we have been defeated, not so much by external circumstances, but by impediments we have clung to in ourselves. We are awed and we are fascinated. Both—and both together!

Sanctity is not confined to one religion. The Buddhist, the Hindu, and the Moslem have their saints, though it will be most convenient in this paper to think of the term as it developed in Judaism and flowered in Christianity. Most of our space, however, must be given to the origin of the concept in the ages which preceded the emergence of the great Faiths.

A sense of the holy is far older than all the great religions. By the time the great religions took shape man is using clear concepts. The Deity is thought of as being Spirit, possessing Power, Reason and Will. The greater the religion, the richer its clear ideas. The development of religion is largely a development of its *thought*. It has grown in rationality. Dogmas have been rough-hewn, then shaped and, at the last, finely chiselled. Theology has become a science. Some of the debates that went to the shaping of the creeds can be followed only by philosophers.

Nor would the student of religion regret this if religion in some eras had not become intellectually lopsided. There is more in the religious consciousness than can ever go into concepts. It is generally conceded now that the non-rational has a contribution to make as well as the rational. The arrogance of supposing that what could not be clearly expressed could be cheerfully discarded has impoverished religion and made lonely men of its mystics and seers. So far from it being a mark of greater intellectual grasp to press only along the rational path, it was, in some ways, the path of least resistance. One had at least the help of language. The things discarded would not go into words; and how can one discuss what will not go into words?

But, perhaps, it is only *precise* words they will not go into. Mystics and seers are not normally dumb. If they preach the virtues of silence, they do so like Carlyle "in thirty volumes." Primitive man was aware of more things than he could put into clear concepts and the devout soul has been in that situation ever since. Religion has many inexpressible experiences. Indeed, those experiences may prove the unique contribution of the religious consciousness to man's understanding of himself and his world. To deny the contribution to religion of all which will not go into precise terms, is to equate the Deity with human ideas of His attributes, whereas those attributes are but predicates of the Sublime, Who is infinitely beyond their power fully to express, much less to encompass, and never to exhaust.

Throughout our enquiry this contribution of the non-rational must be borne in mind. Clearly, we do not mean the irrational. But just as man knows only the skin of the sea, and a few hundred feet beneath it, but is aware that the ocean is over six miles deep in places, and that the vast unexplored depths constantly affect the shallow area of his knowledge,

so the religious thinker knows that beneath the area of ordered thought there is a vast ocean of which he cannot speak in clear terms and with detailed understanding, but of which he feels the pull, and knows the effect, and from which he enjoys experiences he cannot put into plain words.

Scientific men used to smile at Pascal's assertion that "the heart has reasons of which the head has no knowledge" and decline to admit that thought can proceed on images as well as on ideas.

Yet it can. One can go by plane as well as by car. If, at the last, we conclude that there *is* something unusual in the way saints apprehend, we shall remember that we met at the outset of our study this contribution of the non-rational to the idea of the holy, and must keep in mind that there are other paths to knowledge than the path of logical thought.

Certainly our study begins before the emergence of clear ideas. Primitive man felt himself to be in a world in which he stood over against a three-fold "otherness": (i) things, (ii) other men, (iii) Something or Someone high and eerie.¹ It is with his awareness of this Something or Someone that we have to do, and our aim is to isolate in particular one element that we shall find there—the "germ" of the holy.

The most illuminating study of this question in our time is the work of Dr. Rudolf Otto. The First World War was still in process when he published *Das Heilige*. Ten editions had appeared in German before it was turned into English, though perhaps the best illustration of the influence of the book is seen, not in its numerous editions, but in the way in which terms Otto felt driven to mint have become common coin in theological exchange.

Otto began by asserting that "Holiness is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion."² In the development of man's thought it gets transferred to ethics, but it is not derived from ethics. It includes "a quite specific element or 'moment' which sets it apart from the rational"—i.e. makes it impossible for the mind to grasp in terms of clear ideas. An analogy may be found in a quite different sphere—the category of the beautiful. A sunset cannot go into a syllogism.

Holiness means in common use to-day "absolutely good," but that use is derived. If the word originally included the seed idea of moral perfection (and that would be debated), it was not the only element and it was not the chief. Another was present, more primitive and more prominent. For this other element, Otto felt the need of a new name and adopted a word coined from the Latin *numen*. *Omen* had given us *ominous*: *numen* could give us *numinous*. He holds that "this mental state is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any others; and, therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot strictly be defined."³

¹ Cf. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man*, p. 39.

² *The Idea of the Holy* (English trans., p. 5).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

He holds that this element lives in all real religion. It is in the Hebrew *qadosh*, in the Greek *ἅγιος* and in the Latin *sacer*. All these terms have come to connote ethical excellence, but they were not ethically excellent in origin and, even to-day, could they be robbed of the numinous element, something precious in them would perish. They would pass from the realm of the spiritual to become terms of interest only to moralists.

If a man has no sense of the numinous, there is not much one can do about it. Only God can open the eyes of the blind. Preachers in all ages, seeking to express the inexpressible and consciously failing, have said with Myers' *St. Paul*:

Oh could I tell, ye surely would believe it!
 Oh could I only say what I have seen!
 How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
 How, till he bringeth you where I have been ?

Yet one can do a little. One can *try* to say it. One can draw analogies from other realms of thought. One can put a man in the place where others have seen it. One can encourage oneself with the knowledge that "the Father seeketh such"¹ and that it is highly doubtful if any man ever went through life without a gleam.

But more than this one cannot do. It is not taught, or explained, or expressed in a formula. Those who "attend" to the Spirit are "quicken'd."

When Otto comes to analyse the numinous he pays tribute to Schleiermacher for isolating the "feeling of dependence" in this experience, but criticizes him under two heads.

First, because Schleiermacher makes his "feeling of dependence" differ from the feeling of dependence we have in other realms of life only in degree, whereas (so Otto argues), it is a difference of intrinsic quality. The two states of mind are clearly distinguished introspectively. This abasement before the Great Other is "only definable through itself" just because it is "so primary and elementary a datum of our psychical life." He names it "creature-consciousness." It is "abasement into nothingness before an overpowering absolute might."²

Secondly, he criticizes Schleiermacher because Schleiermacher argued that we only come to the fact of God as the result of an inference. Having a "feeling of dependence," man posits a cause for it.

The psychological data do not bear this out. Indeed, they testify to the contrary. Creature-consciousness is a concomitant and, at the same time, a consequence of another feeling-element "which casts it like a shadow" and which is begotten by the numinous felt as objective and outside of the self.

We have spoken of "analysing" the numinous, but the word "analyse" is too concrete. The nature of the holy can best be hinted at by looking

¹ St. John 4: 23.

² *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 10.

at the feelings it begets in the mind. Let anyone who knows in experience what it is to have commerce with heaven think his way to the heart of his awareness and he will find what Otto calls *mysterium tremendum*: a feeling sometimes serene and sometimes volcanic; sometimes ecstatic and sometimes adoring. Charles Wesley tried to say it in a hundred ways and this among them:

The speechless awe that dares not move
And all the silent heaven of love.

It is in this dim awareness in the mind of primitive man that we must work who would understand the origins of the holy. Even for the Christian, to begin with the Bible is to begin too late.

Passing *tremendum* first through his prism, Otto distinguishes three elements in it. The element of Awefulness, of Overpoweringness, and of Energy.

There is common agreement that primitive man knew an unearthly dread. It was no ordinary dread. It was not fear of other men; not even of *hosts* of other men: nor of wild beasts who disputed a cave with him. It was different in kind. It was shuddering and eerie and awe-ful. It was the realm of *mana* and *tabu*.

But notice, "the awe-ful" is still present in those lines of Charles Wesley just quoted: sublimated, adoring, and mute. We see in the unearthly dread of primitive man the seed and the soil from which that noble abasement sprang. The sublimest adoration of the saint is but the long refinement of that early awe.

To the element of the Aweful is added "Overpoweringness" (*majestas*).

A gleam of the numinous still lies upon the word "majesty." Who cannot feel the unutterable majesty and overpoweringness of the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords and only Ruler of Princes? "The Lord," says the Psalmist, "sitteth as King for ever."¹

Charles Wesley says it for us again:

The o'erwhelming power of saving grace,
The sight that veils the seraph's face; . . .

O'erwhelming . . . and the veiled seraphs! The seed and the soil of this holy adoration are both in the awareness of the numinous in early man.

To the Aweful and the Overpowering is added Energy.

At the heart of the sense of the holy early man discerned a pulsating *activity*. Even before the era of the great religions begins, our primitive forbears knew that the Great Other *did things*. Power resided at the heart of the Mysterious. It was with a *living* God that early man felt himself in contact.²

Those who would replace the God of religion with the Absolute of philosophy know that the battleground is here. Those who still believe

¹ Psalm 29: 10.

² Cf. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 48.

in a Living God, and seek to read in the events of their own time the righteous sentence of the Almighty on the conduct of men will feel their kinship with primitive man who sensed also, in his dim way, the urgent Energy at the centre of that Something or Someone with whom "he had to do."

Otto slips into an examination of *mysterium*, quoting Tersteegen: "A God comprehended is no God."

And God is not comprehended. He is the "Great Other." Mysteriousness and awefulness are not to be equated. A piece of machinery I do not understand is not strictly "mysterious" to me. It is, at present, beyond me. I cannot grasp it now. It is a problem in that sense but not (with an exact use of words) *mysterious*—for some understand it.

But the numinous is *mysterium*. Absolutely and forever beyond my comprehension. Not beyond my approaching. But beyond my comprehension. "A God comprehended is no God." Nothing can give adequate expression to this remoteness in accessibility. "Transcendent" is the word theologians use and "supernatural," perhaps, the plain man. Both will serve though neither is adequate. As so often in these dim borderlands, we deeply feel and cannot clearly say.

Fascination is another element Otto distinguishes in the holy. In the combination of daunting and fascination he finds "the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion."¹ For primitive man the daemonic-divine object allured and repelled; charmed and terrified; held and yet utterly abashed. Otto thinks the daunting preceded the fascination.

To master the mysterious, primitive man employed magic. He wanted to use the power of God *for his own ends*. But not—in the history of the race—for long. To have God, and "to be had" by Him, became an end in itself. Remote ages dimly anticipated the cry of the saint: "It is not Thy gifts that I desire: it is Thyself."

In this soil grew the seed of some of the strangest and some of the most beautiful plants in the garden of humanity. To what amazing lengths have men and women gone to prepare their hearts as a dwelling-place of the divine. To have God: to be possessed by the Spirit: to be indwelt . . . ages and ages before THE LORD GAVE THE WORD in Christ men aspired. All the rigours of asceticism, the fastings and floggings and macerations and brandings . . ., all for this.

And the possibility of response to this fascination is in *all* men. "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." There is the ground of our hope: that when we weary of the things of earth we shall turn to Him in whom alone we can find rest for our souls.

In its climacteric moments the response to fascination brims over. This is the "overaboundingness" of which the mystics speak. Teresa of Avila knew it and, having known it, longed to die: did, indeed, die of it

¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 31.

at the last. She succumbed to no normal illness; it was "the inextinguishable flame of Divine Love which caused her death."

In seeking to isolate the non-rational element in the idea of the holy, we had need to set aside the strictly ethical, and suggested (with Otto) that ethics belonged to later stages of thought, or was present in the primitive mind (if at all) in "germ"; and, in any case, was not our chief concern here.

But we are moving on to examine the idea of the holy in the Old Testament and, therefore, to a maturer stage of development and the question of how the ethical appeared in the numinous may be anticipated.

In this connection Otto dislikes the phrase "gradually evolved"—and not merely the phrase; he contests the idea. The appearance of the moral "ought" in man is said by many to have its origins in the constraint of the herd: that the custom of the clan "gradually evolved" into the moral imperative. How it so evolved is not explained.

Can it be explained on these lines? If the content of conscience is what society approves, did conscience itself arise in the same way? Otto does not think so. He holds that "'ought' has a primary and unique meaning, as little derivable from another as blue from bitter . . ." ¹ "The idea 'ought' is only 'evolvable' out of the spirit of man itself, and then in the sense of being 'arousable' because it is already potentially implanted in him. Were it not so, no 'evolution' could effect an introduction for it."²

He holds rather that feelings like ideas are associated and can excite each other but that, so far from the custom of the clan "evolving" (or being transmuted) into a personal and commanding and deeply-felt "ought," the connection is to be sought rather in the association of feelings. It may be, seeing that both the custom of the clan and the moral imperative are constraints upon conduct, that the former aroused the latter in the mind but, if that were so, it aroused what was already potentially planted there and man effected a transition from one to the other. But it was a *replacement* of one by the other, not a *transmutation*. Moral obligation is not derived from any other feeling: it is *sui generis* and unevolable.

The relation of the rational and the non-rational in the idea of the holy becomes clear at this point. The association of feelings sets up lasting connections between one emotion and another. The religious and ethical are conjoined in this way and not by mere conjunction but by inward cohesion and affinity. The numinous and the ethical combine like oxygen and hydrogen in water, and become indistinguishable in experience. So there emerges the unitary but complex category of "holy" itself, "richly charged and complete, and in its fullest meaning."³ Reason may strain dregs out of the water. This is its great but only office.

We may go further. We observed that the reaction of the mortal to the numinous was "creature-consciousness" with its attendant feelings

¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

of human littleness and abasement. Another sort of self-disvaluation awakes with this: uncleanness, pollution, profanity. It is marked, Otto argues, when it comes, by an immediate spontaneity. It is not a fruit of deliberation but breaks "palpitant from the soul."

To those who know nothing of it, nothing much again can be said. A man must "see" the numinous to feel profane. Yet, if we were right in doubting whether any man passes through life without catching a gleam of the numinous, we may doubt, also, if any man is quite unaware of a sense of uncleanness within.

Men are often unschooled in their own nature, inattentive to what stirs only vaguely within them, and either neglectful or false in their interpretation of experience.

The religious consciousness of man developing through all ages, and awake among all peoples, bears immense testimony to this double apprehension of mortal mind: a judgment of unspeakable *appreciation* on the *numen*, and, in its presence, a judgment of unspeakable *depreciation* on the self. Only the *numen* is truly holy. If the numinous belongs to a few mortals (and community at its earliest stage included its spiritual leaders), this is merely by reflection. Only God is of transcendent worth and, therefore, *worshipful*: perfect, beautiful, sublime. From the far future we hear the crashing paean of praise: "Blessing and honour, glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne."

But man is dyed in sin, loathsome and polluted. The awe of *tremendum*, when united with the ethical, has unfolded into this. Man needs cleansing, atonement and sanctification.

To the threshold of the great religions—and a little beyond—have we now come.

The development of the idea of the holy in the Old Testament is a fascinating study in itself. Holiness at first attached to *things* (the holy place, the tent of meeting, the ark and the vessels of the cultus), and to persons only as they handled those things or attended at the holy place. Holiness was quasi-physical and attached to the celebrant as an odour might cling to the clothes of a man who worked in a perfume factory.

But the great contribution of the Old Testament to the idea of the holy is the growth of the ethical within a concept that was largely ritual in its origin. Indeed, the word "holy" remains mainly a ritualistic word all through the Old Testament but it made a marriage with the word "righteous" and it was a marriage "made in heaven." In Isaiah we see the sovereign assertion of the supremacy of righteousness within the concept of the holy. Ritual still has its subordinate place but now—and for the first time with unmistakable clearness—a towering figure in Israel (and in all humanity) reads the mind of God and asserts that *only the righteous can be "holy"*. The very fact that the phrase now seems a tautologous platitude illustrates the complete triumph of what was then a piercing insight. During the first World War, Dr. Esme Wingfield-Stratford was talking with a learned Brahmin in India about Sivaji, the immoral and blood-stained founder of the Mahratta Confederacy, and protesting against his status as a holy man.

The learned Brahmin said: "Sahib . . . I tell you what I would not tell another Sahib. Sivaji holy man but Sivaji *not man of good conduct.*"

Isaiah had passed that point eight centuries before Christ. For the study of holiness in the Old Testament perhaps nothing surpasses Isaiah 6: 1-8.

In the New Testament sanctity is taught as the privilege of every believer through the operations of the Holy Spirit. All Christians are called "saints" in the New Testament but here, of course, it does not mean a person of superlative goodness so much as a person on the way to superlative goodness and who—unless he resists the Holy Spirit—may be expected sometime to arrive.

In the centuries succeeding the closing of the canon that expectation abated and a double standard of morality insinuated itself into Christian thought: one for the ordinary plain Christian in the world; another for those who were "all-out" for holiness and sought the monastery or convent. Either could achieve "heroic virtue" but expectation centred rather in those who had sought the cloister than in those who stayed in the world.

The tests of sanctity are now quite precise in the Roman Church and not imprecise in the Eastern Church. The Anglican Church has appointed a commission to consider the possible enlargement of its own calendar of saints and perhaps to shape its own more simple tests.

In Churches robustly Protestant no legal or precise tests of sanctity exist. The view is taken that as only God can make a saint, only God can know when he is made, but the view is widely held that the Church needs saints, and needs to recognize them, because human nature is bent on hero-worship and the people are worshipping the wrong heroes.

Millions of young people at an impressionable age all over the world make heroes and heroines of their favourite film actors. The pictures of women, some of whom have prostituted the "holy estate of matrimony," drifted from one husband to another, deserted their children and engaged in little more than licensed harlotry, are pinned up in the homes of young people and adored as the most admirable and enviable persons alive. Something of the moral decay of the times is to be explained by this perversion of the impulse of hero-worship. It is a serious and sad thing when the youth of the world admire the wrong people.

So the quest of an understanding of sanctity relates itself to the affairs of modern life and our philosophical interests prove again to be more practical than many suppose.

Perhaps I may conclude this paper by indicating the lines on which (as it seems to me) further thinking needs to be done.

(i) Are the saints religious geniuses, so set apart from ordinary men that, while their stories may be of fascinating interest, they give no practical guidance to plain people? Or is sanctity for *all*, and would a study of the "methods" of the saints prove of the most real help to the humblest

¹ *King Charles the Martyr*, p. vi.

aspirant after a higher life? Most generations produce a genius in painting or music. Because he soars above his fellows, he is not so set apart as to be without influence on the practice and history of his art. On the contrary! The age may be named after him and his influence felt for generations. Is it possible that those who practise the art of living are neglecting the greatest examples the ages have thrown up?

(ii) What effect has the new psychology had on the quest for holiness? There are those who suggest that the hand which opened the door on the subconscious, and put up a pointer to the unconscious also, has made the hope of sanctity more a mirage than ever. "Is salvation possible for the subconscious?" is commonly debated now among theologians.

But no close reader of the letters of St. Paul would seriously argue that he was unacquainted with the subconscious. He speaks of "another law working in my members." He knew what it was to will one thing and do another. The "unconscious motive" would be new to him only in name.

How can race and family memories, which might rise in the mind of any man to pull him from the path of probity, be met and conquered by the earnest pilgrim of perfection?

(iii) In what sense is holiness an achievement and in what sense is it a gift? If it is a gift, how does a man put himself in the way to receive it?

Hagiographers constantly speak of the "achievements" of the saints. The saints do not commonly speak of any achievements themselves. If anyone tells them to their face that they are further on the road of holiness than their fellows, they find it hard, or impossible, to believe, and the most that can be wrung from them in the way of admission is that God must have given them special grace.

Which is it—gift or achievement? And, if it is both, can a balance be struck between the two?

(iv) The re-union of the dismembered branches of the Christian Church is constantly discussed in these days. Are those people right who say that the saints will have more to do with its consummation than ecclesiastics? Ecclesiastics moil for a formula. The saints speak to each other's heart, and link hands across the barriers of denominations. It would surprise people, unread in hagiography, how close are the experiences of the saints even when they are divided by centuries and divided also by denominational walls. A sharper contrast could hardly be drawn, say, than that of St. Teresa of Avila and John Howe—a Spanish Roman Catholic and an English Puritan. More than a century divides them in time. Each would have regarded the other as being in heresy. Yet their insights and their discernings of God's love are staggering at times in their parallelism. So are some of their experiences. Teresa tells how she once saw an angel "with a long golden arrow, and on the tip of it I seemed to see a little flame. Then it befell that he pierced me with the arrow right into my heart; and when he withdrew it, it seemed that he drew my innermost heart out with it. Finally, he left me all afire with the burning love of God."¹

¹ *Autobiography*, chap. XXIX, paras. 16-18.

On the blank leaf of John Howe's study Bible, and under date December 26, 1689, he tells of "a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays from the lofty throne of the Divine Majesty which did seem to dart into my open and expanded heart." He found the experience "ravishing;" and this, and subsequent visitations, "surpassed the most expressive words" his thoughts could suggest.¹

I never look at Bernini's famous monument in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome—or pictures of it—in which, with all the extravagance of the baroque, Bernini seizes on that moment in Teresa's life, without thinking also of the "copious stream of celestial rays" which darted into John Howe's "open and expanded breast." Evangelical and Catholic: Puritan and Carmelite. The saints interpret one another. Is it part of their sublime task to knit again the torn robe of Christendom?

(v) Finally, it would be humble to think again on the conviction of working people that any study of sanctity is completely irrelevant to them. A writer who claims to know the masses says: "The idea of a holy working man is grotesque. The virtues which the working classes at their best have recognized have been rather those of integrity, generosity, sincerity, good comradeship than those of meekness, purity, piety, self-abnegation and the like."²

Are they so different? Can *anybody* who has a fight against evil afford to neglect the saints?

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN (Rev. S. C. THEXTON) said: In opening the discussion as Chairman, I will begin by saying a word about Dr. Rudolf Otto's analysis of the religious consciousness. While personally I feel that Otto's description of the religious experience, in terms of the mystery and fascination of the "otherness" that confronts man, is most helpful, I am not altogether convinced of the soundness of his conclusions about it.

For instance, is it true to say that this sense of the *numinous* is altogether unique to religion? I would mention two illustrations which suggest to me that what Otto describes is not altogether exclusive to the sphere of religion. First of all, was there not in one's childhood reaction to a ghost story, something of this same experience? There was a sense of something mysterious, powerful, frightening—and yet, even as you shuddered, you wanted the story to go on. You had some sense both of the mystery and awfulness on the one hand, and the fascination on the other. There is perhaps a better illustration to be found in the realm of mountaineering. Even in my own slight experience, I have known what it is to experience what one might call the terror of the mountains—to be there alone on the slope, with the chasm beneath and the peak beyond, and to feel something of that mingled awe and fascination, fear and longing, which Otto describes as characteristic of man's awareness of the *numinous*.

Again, it is very easy for Otto's emphasis upon the "otherness" of that which man apprehends in religious experience to be carried too far. It cannot be, as some have described it, the "wholly other", since if it were so it is difficult to see how man could have any kind of experience of it at all.

In general, I think that Otto's description, if pressed too far, runs into the danger of getting back to the old conception of a religious instinct—some peculiar capacity within man which is incapable of further analysis. I am not persuaded that this is

¹ *Life of John Howe*. [Edit. 1863], p. 357.

² Box, *The Ethics of Socialism*, p. 17.

so. I think that in what Otto calls the experience of the numinous, there are elements which can be discerned—elements like fear, curiosity, submission, self-regard and others. In short, I believe that a further analysis is possible, and that the experience he describes draws upon psychic forces or energies which are at work in other fields of experience as well.

One of the most difficult questions raised in the lecture—and I am grateful to Dr. Sangster for stimulating us to think about it—is the question as to how the ethical became allied to the holy. I do not claim to know the answer. It may be said that it is the great contribution of the Old Testament that it did bring about a synthesis of the two. But when one asks how it came about, it is a difficult question to answer. It appears to me that as man became aware of this reality over against himself, it seemed to call for some response from him—awakened a desire for union with it, or to utilize it in some ways for his own ends. He tried to make that response in various ways, such as those of magic and ritual. These were attempts to bridge the gulf between himself and the “other”, to become familiar with it and establish rapport. The contribution of the great Hebrew prophets was to assert that this “otherness” of God which beckoned to something in man, was not to be thought of merely in terms of power or might, but in terms of righteousness, mercy, forgiveness. If therefore you wish to share something of the life and nature of this “other One” who calls to you, then those things must find some reflection in your own heart and life.

One might ask at this point whether the beginning of the quest for holiness did not begin on the rational, rather than the non-rational side. It is an interesting question. Which is the prior element? Is it non-rational—vision, the mystical sense of something “other”? Or is it rational—the fact that because you come to believe certain things about life and the forces that seem to control it, your conclusions indicate certain lines of conduct on your part? On this view it would mean that the first rung in the ladder that leads to sainthood is labelled “duty”. Perhaps too many studies in psychology of religion with regard to the saints have concentrated upon the extraordinary cases. Many of us, I suppose, have known people whom we should describe as saints. I wonder how many of them would say that for them the good life began with this sense of the “other” or the *mysterium tremendum*, of which Otto speaks. I believe a great many of them started from the rational side of doing what seemed to be their duty to God and man. Take, for instance, John Wesley. How far was his experience of God, his vision, dependent upon his very rational and methodical attitude to religion and the quest for holiness in the early part of his life?

If you concentrate upon the mystical side of religion exclusively, you tend to get the dervish or ecstatic, whose holiness may be entirely divorced from morals or ethics. On the other hand, if you concentrate entirely upon the rational side, the desire to live the good life, then you get something like the Confucian sage or the Buddhist monk. The highest sainthood would seem to occur when both elements find a meeting place in one individual.

The question Dr. Sangster raised as to the relation of all this to the new psychology is a very interesting one. It does seem to me that holiness has something to do with “whole-ness”, that the saint is someone who really does become integrated at the level of a God-centred life. That integration may begin on the rational side—in early training or in deliberate discipline. And because the saint is single-minded, because he really does take the implications of his belief in God seriously, not only his whole body but his whole mind, at all its levels, becomes full of light.

Dr. E. WHITE said: We are grateful to Dr. Sangster for his illuminating paper. He touches on psychological problems more than once in his paper.

Religious experience comes within the realm of psychological investigation, and many books have been written dealing with or referring to this subject. Such books as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by James, *Conversion* by Sancto de Sanctis, and more recently, *Thouless's* and *From's* books on psychology and religion come to mind. Unfortunately the religion described by some psychologists, particularly by Freud and From, is not Christianity at all, but a colourless theism far removed from the warm living theology of Christianity.

Freud attempted to explain the sense of the numinous as an infantile regression. He regarded it as a reminiscence of the time when the infant opened its eyes on to a strange, wonderful, unknown world, and was filled with surprise and awe. He gradually discovered the "not me" outside himself, and felt almost lost in an immensity of space. This seems to me to be quite inadequate. As James points out, the experiences of the saint and the mystic lead to a great enrichment of personality, and appear to supply a new energy and motive for life. It is difficult to see how infantile regression could achieve this. Myers' theory is much more in accordance with the facts of experience. He postulates a subliminal self extending far deeper than the Ego, and holds that it is *via* this deeper, larger self that the Ego come into relationship with God. Some of Jung's teaching, especially that relating to the Collective Unconscious, points in the same direction.

The question Dr. Sangster raises concerning salvation for the unconscious opens up a large field of enquiry. I would make two comments on this.

Firstly, there is a danger in thinking of different areas of mental life as if they were separate entities. The super-ego, the Id, etc., are not separate and distinct things; they are different aspects of one personality, a unity. Surely salvation is for the entire man, not for a piece of him, such as the Ego or the Id! After all, these terms are used for purposes of description, and are not to be taken too literally as though they represented entities complete in themselves.

Secondly, we must not think of the Unconscious as being either evil or good in itself. It contains potentialities for development in either direction. When St. Paul prays for his Ephesian converts that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith", is he not suggesting that Christ should become the Lord of the unconscious as well as the conscious life? The "heart" in Scripture appears to include the whole of the "mind" investigated by modern psychologists. "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

I should not accept the view that modern psychology has made the hope of sanctity more of a mirage than ever. On the other hand, in the limited transformation of personality brought about by a successful analysis, there lies a reason for belief in a much wider and deeper transformation becoming possible when the depths of man's personality come into relationship with the Spirit of God.

This is but a suggestion of the lines along which thought might be directed. The questions which Dr. Sangster raises concerning the relation of the New Psychology to the quest for holiness might well supply a subject for a further paper to be read before the Victoria Institute.

Mr. A. H. BOULTON said: I have been very interested to hear what Dr. Sangster has said, especially in connection with the way in which the movement from the numinous to the ethical has been characteristic of the history of religion. It is perhaps relevant to point out how the same process has operated in the realm of law. I have recently been reading the history of the evolution of legal concepts, and here we have the gradual movement away from ideas which are essentially magical, toward our modern concepts which are based upon rational thought. But here we come up against a difficulty in that, as we move from the magical to the rational in the realm of law, we come to a point at which we have to face the fact that our ideas of right and wrong have become relative and have lost contact with the moral absolutes upon which we know that they ought to be founded. This is a real problem to be faced, because the movement away from magic toward reason is itself wholly good, and yet its apparent consequence in the loss of absolute values is dangerous. Just as the movement away from the merely numinous to the ethical in religion must retain the sense of mystery in the idea of the holy, so, in the rules for human conduct there is need that we do not lose sight of the absolute values in which those rules rest.

One homely illustration comes to my mind in connection with Dr. Sangster's comments about the need for ideals and the false ideals to which it is only too easy for the young to be attracted. In a hostel for girl workers maintained by my Company I recently went through the dormitories occupied by the employees, whilst none of the occupants were there. We have a number of Irish girls. The manageress made the comment that it was easy to see which rooms were occupied by the Irish

girls and which by English, because the former pinned to the wall pictures of the Virgin and the Saints, the latter photographs of film stars. Comment is perhaps superfluous.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. W. E. FILMER wrote: Dr. Sangster devotes more than half of his paper to guessing what primitive cave-men thought about, before "moving on to examine the idea of the holy in the Old Testament". In the first place, he has no means of knowing what pre-Adamites thought, since they left no written records. Secondly, it is unscriptural to derive the human race of to-day or its beliefs from pre-Adamites, for St. Paul says that God "made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 16: 26; R.S.V.). Elsewhere he confirms the Genesis account of the origin of the human race and its relationship with God (I Tim. 2: 13; I Cor. 15: 21-22, 45; Rom. 5: 12). Thirdly, it has been pointed out by a number of scientists such as D. Dewar, L. M. Davies, G. R. Fleischman and others, in the *Transactions of the Victoria Institute* and in other publications, that the theory of man's evolution from sub-human ancestors cannot be substantiated by any factual evidence.

Dr. Sangster seems to be unaware that the evolutionary theory of religion has long since been discredited, among others by Dr. S. Langdon in *Semitic Mythology* (Vol. V of *The Mythology of all Races*, Archaeological Institute of America). Unlike Otto, who seeks to derive Christianity from pagan sources, Dr. Langdon, basing his conclusions on a sure foundation of the most ancient Semitic and Sumerian pictographic and other written records, traces the pagan religions back to a primitive monotheism such as the Bible shows to have been revealed to Adam.

Commenting on these conclusions in *The Evangelical Quarterly* (April, 1937), Dr. Langdon wrote: "Darwinian evolution applied to the origin and progress of religion can only have one result: it must destroy the faith of mankind that there is any reality in religion at all. That is the conclusion which a very large part of mankind has now drawn from this Anthropological movement, a conclusion for which even Christian theologians are not blameless." Dr. Sangster agrees that "it is a serious and sad thing when the youth of the world admire the wrong people", and refers to the millions who make heroes and heroines of their favourite film actors. Does he not realize that by dragging out Otto's dead and out-of-date theories he is identifying himself with those same theologians who are to blame for depriving these poor folk of a God and thus reducing them to the worship of film-stars as a substitute?

Mr. TITTERINGTON wrote: I am sorry that Dr. Sangster appears to start with the premise that religion developed from primitive concepts. It is fundamental to any consideration of the meaning of sanctity, or holiness, to determine whether the concept originated from a vague awareness, or as a communication from above: whether in fact it began with man, or with God.

Dr. Sangster speaks of holiness in the Old Testament as being mainly a ritualistic word (p. 8), attaching first to things, and only later to persons as associated with things. Is this a correct reading of the Old Testament? The first time the root word (QDSh) appears is in Genesis 2: 3, where it refers to a *day*. Next, in Exodus 3, we read of holy *ground*. Then (ch. 12) we have a holy *convocation*, holy *persons* (ch. 13), God's holy *habitation* (ch. 15), and in ch. 19 a holy *nation*. Not until ch. 26 is there any mention of holy *things*. In each case the context suggests that the holiness is derivative, that is, it arises from a relationship to a holy God. The principle is clearly enunciated in Lev. 11: 44, 45, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy."

Holiness in the creature is, according to Andrew Murray, wholly an impartation of the Divine nature. "In the Divine holiness we have the highest and inconceivably glorious revelation of the very essence of the Divine Being; in the holiness of the saints the deepest revelation of the change by which their inmost nature is renewed into the likeness of God." It is impossible to read the New Testament and conceive of holiness as existing apart from Christ. It is not an innate quality within us, but

the very life of Christ imparted to us. (See the whole Appendix, "The Holiness of God," to his book *Holy in Christ*).

Mr. E. H. BETS wrote: Effectively the thesis of this paper is that there is a call for more "sanctity", this term being held to mean the cult of the numinous, which cult would produce "holy" men, that is those who "have commerce with heaven"—non-rational experience, be it noted, of the mystic, the awe-inspiring, the *mysterium tremendum*. In speaking of such commerce Dr. Sangster seems almost to equate the experiences of Teresa of Avila and John Howe on the one hand with those of such obscenely immoral and bloodthirsty men as the Mahrattan Sivaji on the other.

Using the oft-discredited and refuted theory of evolution, Dr. Sangster in effect makes Christian knowledge and experience of God a kind of development of those of "primitive" man. In so doing he to all intents and purposes sets completely aside the plainest declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ who said "I am the Way . . . No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14: 6). How can traffic with the numinous, with all its mystification, darkness and overpowering awesomeness be "commerce with heaven" as the Christian is given to know it? "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment" (I John 4: 18). In Christian communion with God there is NO *mysterium tremendum*. He is a God made known in perfectly revealed love. Nor is there "speechless awe", Charles Wesley's hymns notwithstanding, for through the spirit of adoption we cry "Abba! Father", and that is the reverse of the numbed silence of fear.

Therefore, should any instructed Christian even seem to have any direct manifestation of God it must necessarily be coloured and characterized by the glory and love revealed in Christ—as indeed proved to be the case with Teresa of Avila, John Howe and many another such.

Mr. R. S. TIMBERLAKE wrote: Dr. Sangster's fascinating paper suffers from the vagueness inherent in its subject and its author will forgive me if I take him to task on one or two matters. I feel that the paper could have been greatly improved by a more drastic treatment of the "origin" of Sanctity—it would have given precision and clarity to the sections dealing with development. As it is, the learned doctor has not produced sufficient evidence to rivet our attention: he must have a wealth of it to hand if he cares to use it.

By getting to grips with the origin of the subject, I think he could throw more light on the likenesses of religious experience in modern or mediaeval times as shown in the lives of saints from different denominations. I am not myself convinced by his quotations towards the end of the paper. The human mind and spirit, human emotions, and a symbolism drawn from human life and art unite to form the common denominator of the saints' experience, and, within the ambit of the Christian Church, they possessed a common source of reverence, piety, and religious ideas. It would have been a marvel if this common material had not produced common results, but can it account for something far more fundamental than visions?

AUTHOR'S REPLY

I listened with great profit to the discussion on the night of the lecture, and have read with care the written communications which have come in since. I acknowledge the force of everything which Mr. Thexton had to say. Origins are proverbially difficult and it will surprise neither him nor me that I have no pat answer to many of his points. I believe that something akin to the *numinous* can be experienced (as he suggests) both in hearing ghost stories and in mountaineering but I question whether this wholly rebuts Rudolf Otto's point. Both of these experiences, in some way, touch the supernatural.

Nor can I—more than he—explain how the great Hebrew prophets perceived in the night and "otherness" of God the burning righteousness which is there. Our fathers would have said that it was "revealed" to the prophets, and it is hard to say more than that. How can we explain ourselves the personal fellowship with

God which has been granted to us: the piercing insight; the authority and assurance that comes with it; its consonance with all God's known will; the "signs following" . . .? Certainty, it issues (as Mr. Thexton says) in a higher degree of integration in a God-centred life, and "wholeness" and "holiness" are seen again to be akin.

Dr. White's contribution left me longing for the very paper he mentions as a possibility in his conclusion. Can our Christian psychologists do more for us here? Full explanations may be too much to hope for, but if we could have more light on how the Spirit of God deals with the deeps of human personality, it would be of incalculable worth. The most practical issues are involved in all this. Devout men and women, longing after holiness and troubled both by the vagaries of their waking thoughts and the vagrancy of their dreams, would find comfort in Dr. White's assurance that "we must not think of the unconscious as being either good or evil in itself". So many simple souls confuse temptation and sin, and feel compelled to "own" whatever image, warmed by desire, flashes into their mind, and they flagellate themselves in ways unhealthy and unjust. I hope that some subsequent lecturer before the Institute will give a paper on the theme which Dr. White suggests.

Mr. Boulton's word has stayed with me ever since he uttered it—not only because of the interesting comparison with legal concepts but because of the telling illustration with which it closed. Comment, as he remarks, is superfluous but the thought it provokes is furious!

Turning to the written communications, I am left wondering whether I have been misunderstood by some of the correspondents. It is no part of my thesis that man could manufacture holiness, or just grow into it, or even "achieve" it by unaided self-effort. God is the centre and soul of all holiness. It is His gift to men in response to faith and obedience.

But I wrestled in the first part of the paper with man's growing awareness of God, and His nature, and His will for men. It is incomprehensible to me that Mr. Betts could think that I was equating the experiences of St. Teresa of Avila and John Howe on the one hand, with the obscenely immoral and bloodthirsty deeds of Sivaji on the other. Nor must he forget that awe is a fitting state of mind in a mortal approaching the holy God, and to quote "Perfect love casteth out fear" in an effort to rebut a proper abasement of the human before the divine is a misuse of Scripture. Intimacy with God must never become familiarity. The fact that we are encouraged to address God as "Abba, Father" gives us no warrant to forget that it is to the *awe-ful* God that we are come.

Moreover, I was at pains to point out that the moral "ought" is no fruit of evolutionary growth. It cannot be derived from what society has found useful or "safe". I quoted: "'Ought' has a primary and unique meaning, as little derivable from another as blue from bitter." It is *implanted* in man and, were it not, "no evolution could effect an introduction for it."

This is part of the answer to Mr. Titterington. It over-simplifies the issue to say that it is "fundamental" to determine whether the concept of holiness originated in a vague awareness or as a communication from above. This is not a clear "either-or". All through my childhood, my father was seeking to impart his high purposes to me. The initiative was his. My apprehension of his aim grew over the years.

It is not dissimilar in God's dealings with our race. Stress the word "originated", and, of course, it all originates with Him. Look at it from the manward side and you see a growing awareness of His will.

Whether or not I have correctly divined a development in the use of *qadosh* will be affected by the dating of the documents.

Of Mr. Timberlake, I would ask this: Remember the proper and necessary limits of a lecture. A "more drastic" treatment of the "origin" of sanctity would have left me no time for the "development" at all. Perhaps I was over-bold to essay the double task, but my own judgment now is that it would have been better had I given *less* time to origins and *more* to development. I am happy, however, to assure Mr. Timberlake that I shall publish a volume shortly on this whole subject and (I hope), in his words, "throw more light on the likenesses of religious experience in modern and medieval times as shown in the lives of saints from different denominations."