

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>

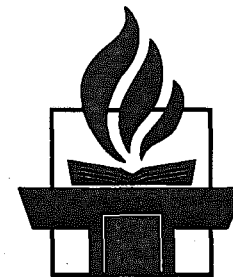
[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php

Reformation
& Revival



A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Volume 4, Number 2 • Spring 1995

Reformation & Revival Journal

A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Published by
Reformation & Revival Ministries, Inc.
P.O. Box 88216
Carol Stream, Illinois 60188-0216
(708) 653-4165

Editor: John H. Armstrong

Associate Editors: Donald E. Anderson

Jim Elliff

Thomas N. Smith

Design and Production: Jennifer McGuire

Subscriptions Manager: Stacy Armstrong

Reformation & Revival Journal (ISSN 1071-7277), (U.S.P.S. 011-791), is published quarterly, for \$20 per year, or \$35 for two years, by Reformation & Revival Ministries, Inc., 152 Yuma Lane, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188-1917. Second-class postage has been paid at Carol Stream, Illinois, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Reformation & Revival Journal*, P.O. Box 88216, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188-0216.

This Journal is indexed in *Christian Periodical Index*.

Reformation & Revival Journal is published four times each year by Reformation & Revival Ministries, Inc., a not-for-profit teaching ministry organized in the state of Illinois in 1991. The ministry is committed to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the infallible Word of God and is in essential agreement with the confessional statements of historic Reformation theology. The purpose of this ministry is centered in its name:

1. To encourage *reformation* in the local Christian churches worldwide,
 2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.
-

Information

Subscription rates are \$20 for one year, \$35 for two years. Please remit in U.S. currency only. For overseas orders add \$4 for each year for postage. Canadian subscribers add \$2 per year for additional postage. Back issues and single issues are \$6 each.

Australian subscriptions available through:

Reformation & Revival Ministries
% Mr. Malcolm Bouchard
110 Marshall Road
Rocklea 4106

United Kingdom subscriptions available through:

Reformation & Revival Ministries
% Miss Irene West
P.O. Box 1W8
Leeds LS16 7XB

Canadian subscriptions available through:

Reformation & Revival Ministries
% Rev. Don B. Cook
P.O. Box 2953
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 5G5

Correspondence concerning articles, editorial policy, books for review, suggested manuscripts, and subscriptions should be addressed to the editor. Comments are welcome.

The conviction of the staff and editors of the *Reformation & Revival Journal* is that awakening, of the kind seen in the First Great Awakening in this country, wedded to the doctrinal concerns of the historic Protestant Reformation as expressed in the terms *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, is needed in our generation.

ISSN 1071-7277 All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise marked, are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Table of Contents

Reformation & Revival Journal

<i>Editor's Introduction</i>	9
John H. Armstrong	
<i>The Holiness of God and His Redeemed People</i>	15
William Sill	
<i>The Glory of God</i>	41
Tom Austin	
<i>Doctrine and Holiness</i>	59
Douglas Wilson	
<i>The Holiness of God and Assurance That I Am a Christian</i>	63
Tom Wells	
<i>The Providence of God</i>	73
Samuel A. Owen	
<i>Cultivating Holiness</i>	81
Joel R. Beeke	
<i>Trying to Please Men: A Practice Filled with Danger</i>	113
George M. Bowman	
<i>Annotated Bibliography</i>	125
<i>Book Reviews</i>	133

“What Makes God So Totally Different?”

John H. Armstrong

One of the greatest minds America has produced was saturated with the great truths of Scripture. I refer to the mind of Jonathan Edwards, a philosopher and theologian of the most Christian sort. His was a worldview filled with Christ and His kingdom.

It was Edwards, this profoundly biblical thinker, who wrote, “Holiness is more than a mere attribute of God—it is the sum of all His attributes, the outshining of all that God is.”

Within the revelation of God in sacred writ nothing is more plainly accentuated than the excellency of Jehovah’s holiness. Over 900 times the word holy is used. Any object or place associated with God is designated as holy. Any person who lives in covenantal relationship with Him is called to be holy.

When the redeemed sing to the Lamb in the Revelation they say:

Great and marvelous are Thy works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?
For Thou alone are holy;
For all the nations will come and worship before Thee,
For Thy righteous acts have been revealed (Rev. 15:3-4).

Forty times in the Old Testament God is called “the Holy One” or “the Holy One of Israel.” Twenty two times we read of “the holy name.” Again and again God calls upon His people to be holy, as seen in a representative text like this, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2).

In the New Testament the same truth runs like a solid thread throughout. The third person of the triune Godhead, revealed as the One who empowers us in this present age, is called more often than by any other designation, “the *Holy Spirit*,” reminding us of the work He comes to accomplish in and through Christian believers.

The Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote, “Holiness is God’s beauty and glory. When God would be drawn—as much as He can be—He is drawn in this attribute of holiness. Power is in His hand; omniscience in His eyes; mercy in His bowels; but holiness is His beauty!”

If God speaks through a burning bush the ground of that place becomes “holy ground” (Ex. 3:5). Articles used in the worship of the true God are “holy objects” (Num. 4:19). The weekly Sabbath of the covenant is His holy day (Ex. 20:11). His designated place of worship is a “holy temple” (Ps. 5:7). The high priest’s golden crown is engraved with the words, “holiness to Jehovah,” and the crown itself is said to be a “holy crown” (Ex. 29:6). The ark of the covenant is “the holy ark” (2 Chron. 35:3). Due to the sanctifying presence Zion becomes His “holy mountain” (Ps. 2:6) and Jerusalem His “holy mountain Jerusalem” (Isa. 66:20). The whole of the tabernacle is “holy” and the inner sanctuary is the “Holy of Holies.” Even heaven above is His “holy habitation” (Deut. 26:15; Ps. 47:8).

The holiness of God is celebrated in heaven more than any other attribute. When man, albeit for a brief moment, has a glimpse of God it is always God’s holiness which overwhelms him. When Isaiah sees God in the temple vision, he exclaims, “Woe is me! For I am ruined” (Isa. 6:5). When Job, that godly believer of ancient time, saw who God was he exclaimed, “Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (42:6). Ezekiel caught just a short glimpse of God’s holiness and “fell upon his face” in speechless amazement. And John the Apostle saw the blazing holiness of the risen Christ while on the lonely island of Patmos, and he too “fell at His feet as a dead man” (Rev. 1:17).

The holiness of God. It is altogether beyond our comprehension. It is the blazing majesty of God’s perfection. It is the excellency of all that He is, in whole and in part. Everything God *thinks*, everything God *purposes*, everything God *does*, indeed everything God *is*, is altogether and consistently holy!

But What Is God’s Holiness?

Scholars disagree regarding the meaning of this word. The majority opinion is that the word means “to cut,” “to separate,” “to shine” or to be “set apart.” It is first used in Genesis 2:3 of the seventh day being “set apart” as holy. Israel is a holy nation because she is “set apart” from other nations.

I believe three things help us to understand the richness of this term.

First, the separateness of God. The prophet writes, “For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’” (Isa. 57:15). God is completely separate and distinct from His creatures and His creation. Contrary to numerous false religions and philosophies of God He is not one in His essence with us or anything else created. He is separate—Holy! This is why Isaiah says nothing can be compared to Him (45:5)! He is wholly other.

Second, God is moral perfection. First John 1:5 says, “God is light.” God is a perfect Being in all that touches truth and goodness. There is nothing but good in God. His essence is made up of pure holiness in all that He is. God does what is right, and He does so always and eternally, and by nature.

Third, there is no sin, imperfection or unhappiness in God. As 1 John 1:5 adds, “in Him there is no darkness at all.” Job 34:10 adds, “Far be it from God to do wickedness.” God’s very essence and thus every action that flows out of His purpose and plan are free from evil (Hab. 1:13).

God’s holiness, a grand theme, is perhaps the greatest for us to ponder if we would know God. The implications of His holiness are immense. His holiness demands our worship according to His Word. We dare not worship Him as we please, but rather as He ordained.

Further, holiness in God necessitates His judgment of sin

and sinners. For God to “pass over” sin without judging it is impossible. This is precisely what makes the Gospel so amazing. In Christ God judges sin on behalf of those who believe. Only when we recover the necessity of God’s punishment of sin in the last Adam will we be moved with utter amazement at redemption as we ought.

Holiness in God brings a deeper, and deepening, awareness of sin in us. When we see our sin in the light of His holiness we shall hate it the more and flee it more readily. Both the personal and corporate effects of such a sight would work mighty reformation in the church in our time.

Finally, holiness in God demands that we pursue holiness personally. As the writer of Hebrews says, “without sanctification no one will see the Lord” (12:14). To this pursuit we turn much of our attention in this issue. If God is holy, we too must be holy. We will never be perfectly holy in this life, but we must purpose to strive after holiness. Indeed, if we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit one important evidence that a true regenerating work has taken place is that we will long for holiness and intentionally pursue it with great care.

There is a holiness that is imputed to us when we believe in Christ savingly. This holiness is perfect. There is also a holiness which is personal to us as we grow in Christ. This holiness is imperfect by the very nature of what it is and how it has continual room for growth. This is precisely what Luther meant by the well known phrase, *simul justus et peccator*, meaning, “simultaneously sinful, yet justified.”

Holy living demands effort. We are engaged in a battle until death. There is room for change and there is continual need for confession and struggle against sin. Would you be holy? Then you too must engage in this struggle by the power of the Spirit.

The great Reformer Martin Luther sums this up well by writing:

It is not fatal to feel evil lusts, provided we fight against them.

Consequently, a person so afflicted should not judge according to his feeling and should not conclude that he must be lost because of it; but as long as he lives, he should fight against the sins which remain in him and which he feels, should permit the Holy Spirit to work within him, and should sigh without ceasing to be relieved of sin. And indeed such sighing does not cease in believers; and the sighs are so deep that they cannot be expressed, as St. Paul says (Rom. 8:26). But they have an excellent auditor: the Holy Spirit Himself. He readily perceives this longing and comforts such consciences with divine consolation.

Consequently this mixed emotion must continue. We must feel both: the working of the Holy Spirit, and our sin and imperfection. Our case must be like that of a sick person who is in the hands of a physician and, of course, is expected to improve.¹

Endnotes

- 1 *What Luther Says*, Compiler Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 660.