

The God of the Bible is glorious in holiness, by which we may understand that holiness is His glory. The first mention of this glory is in the Song of Deliverance on the Canaan side of the Red Sea. The battle of the Gods had ended in the deliverance of Israel and the overthrow of the Egyptians. The ransomed of the Lord broke out into song, a song of deliverance, of thanksgiving, and of revelation. They had stood breathless and helpless at the gates of death, and suddenly, mysteriously, miraculously, deliverance came and the tense strain reacted in rapture and music.

In such moments the soul sees, the invisible appears, and God is heard. Years are lived in seconds; the revelation of the eternal is flashed in a moment. In such an instant the eternal is seen and secured.

The song of the Israelites gave praise to God in celebration of a great and decisive victory, in which was ended the long struggle between the God of Israel and the gods of the Egyptians. The God of the Israelites had triumphed gloriously. He was their God, the God of their fathers, and the God of their salvation. He was above all gods in majesty, awesomeness, and power; and above all they had beheld His glory, and sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

That was the revelation of God they brought from the awesome experience when they stood still and saw the salvation of God.

No other revelation of God had mentioned the glory of His holiness. Abraham had declared that the Judge of all the earth must do right, but the holiness of God is the quality of character behind the "must" of the Judge. From that time Israel became the witness to this supreme and unique glory. The testimony of Priest and Prophet alike is that God is holy, and they proclaim His holiness to be the reverent witness of heaven and of all the holy angels. The fuller revelation of God in Christ in no way weakens the testimony of the Old Testament. To the Son of God He was the righteous and Holy Father, and the gospel of grace rests upon the unimpaired and eternal holiness of God.

Holiness is His glory. It is of the essence of the divine quality, and of His attributes it is essential to all the rest. The attributes themselves are not God, nor are they mere names for human conceptions of God. God is Spirit. That is the nature of His Being. The attributes are the qualities of His being, and they are distinguishable from each other and distinct from the essence to which they belong. They are characteristic qualities and manifestations of God. Holiness is one of these characteristics, and it is in His holiness that He is glorious. It is an attribute without which God could not be God.

Every essential attribute in a moral being has its active and its passive side. Truth-speaking presupposes a truthful person. Behind all the acts and ways of God there is the nature of God. Quality of being is behind the quality of doing. A holy man is behind a holy life, and a Holy God is the foundation of the will and ways of God. The quality of nature is before the character of conduct, and the character of nature comes before the attribute of power. The holiness of God guarantees the rightness of His thoughts and the integrity of

His ways. Therefore, those who know His name put their trust in Him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy" (Revelation 15:4).

What Is Holiness?

The first conception of holiness is purity. It is more than rectitude and sincerity, for when we think of holiness we mean that the inmost substance of spirit, nature, and life is devoid, not only of stain, but of all tendency or impulse to that which is wrong. God alone is holy in this absolute sense. He is light, and in Him is no darkness, or even shadow of darkness. In Him there is absolute perfection. On its active side it is righteousness, justice, integrity, and truth; on its passive side it is holiness, purity, and love. Not that the holiness of God is inactive; it is not passive in the sense of being inert or inoperative. Righteousness is holiness expressing itself, for the holy nature functions in righteousness. In the Book of Revelation the holiness of God is as a sea of glass, crystal white in its purity, but it is a sea of glass mingled with fire (Revelation 15:11).

The holiness of God is essential to all His moral attributes. The glory of God is His holiness. It is because He is holy that He is worshiped, revered, and trusted. God is sometimes charged with being jealous for His glory, but how can it be otherwise? To be respected, a man must be self-respecting, so God must maintain His holiness if He is to be God. There are ideas about God that make light of His holiness, as if it could be waived at will or the impulse of compassion, without loss. If holiness were lost, nothing would remain. The security of the universe is in the holiness of God. All things subsist because the word of the Lord abideth forever. Men resent the righteous aspect of redemption, but the gospel of the Cross has its power in the holiness of God, for therein is made manifest and vindicated the righteousness of God. In redemption God is just and the justifier of the ungodly, and the redemption Lamb is in the midst of the Throne. The law is holy and in redemption, grace and holiness are not divided, and therein is the miracle of God.

Holiness and Love

The holiness of God is sometimes made subservient to love. The benevolence of God is exalted over His righteousness. This age has no greater need than the recovery of the sense of reverence for the majesty of God's awesome holiness. He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. His judgments are terrible because they are so inflexibly right.

God is love, and God is fire. What is love? And what is fire? Can the two exist apart from each other? Love is the impulse to give itself. Can love give itself without regard for itself? Can love give itself without the passion of self-giving? Self-impartment is very different from self-affirmation, self-expression, or self-realization. There is no true love apart from holiness. Lawless love is just, and love that is not pure carries its own curse.

Holiness and love both exist in God. He is light, and He is love. If they can be distinguished in the order of importance, holiness must be primary and supreme. It is so in every civilized constitution. Where the law is slacked, and judgment goes not forth, the wicked compass about the righteous, and therefore wrong judgment proceedeth (Habakkuk 1:3). That is the prophet's way of expressing Bishop Butler's moral axiom of "the supremacy of conscience in the moral constitution of man." The judge who condemns the criminal

may be so moved by pity that he can only pronounce the sentence with sobs and tears, but civilization rests upon loyalty to justice and truth.

The Word of God puts them in the same order. There is no discord in the God of peace. There is no controversy between His holiness and His love. They know not God who set His holiness at war with His love, and His love at war with His holiness. Their oneness is made manifest in the atonement of the Cross. The antagonism is not between the holiness of God and His love, but between His holiness and sin. God was in Christ reconciling through the gift of His love. The reconciliation was through the blood of the Cross, in which is revealed the majesty of the divine holiness at one with the self-immolation of Infinite Love. The security of our salvation is in the holiness of God, for "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The Imperative of Holiness

The holiness of God has its imperatives for God and for us. There is an inexorable must of holiness. God must, and man must, because God is holy. Holiness is essential in Him, and imperative in us. It is not optional. Disbelief in holiness is disbelief in God. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." If the sinner is to be saved, either he must change or God must change, and God cannot change and be God. Therefore man is called to be holy, because God is holy. His holiness is the reason for ours, and it is also the standard and quality of ours. Holiness is oneness of spirit and oneness of nature with Him. It is God-likeness, based upon the holiness of God's nature, and produced by the experience of His indwelling presence. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

The command is beyond us, but He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. He is able. He must be able. He who demands must make possible. He who wills our sanctification sanctifies. The angels veil their faces and cover their feet in the presence of His holiness, but to the prostrate soul crying "unclean, unclean," God comes with sacrificial fire and cleansing flame.

"And the very God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it."

Eternal Light! Eternal Light!

How pure the soul must be,
When placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,
Can live, and look on Thee!

There is a way for man to rise

To that sublime abode:
An offering and a sacrifice
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God!

MY HIGHEST POSSIBILITIES

I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness. I shall do more for God's glory and the good of men, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood, by being filled with the Spirit at all times, and by attaining the most entire likeness to Christ in mind, will, and heart that it is possible for a redeemed sinner to attain in this world.—M'Cheyne.