

SANCTIFICATION: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN HOLINESS

1. Introduction: Ultimate Holiness

Anyone who has experienced the shear relief of purity will not look upon holiness as distasteful, but rather, as the opposite. If some have pictured it as severe, and even dreary, then they have missed the great throb of life which always accompanies this word 'holy'. The heaviness of guilt is opposite to the freedom of absolute purity. If some burden themselves with legalistic patterns of so-called holiness there is no need to discredit true holiness because of this. Holiness is as much God as anything, even His love, and Him as love. His love cannot be love except it be holy love. For this reason the injunctions to be holy, and follow after love, are not heavy demands so much as positive and useful guidance into full life.

Paul tells us that the ultimate God has for us is that we shall be 'holy and blameless, before Him' (Eph. 1:4). He means that as God is holy so shall we be, and that we will rejoice in this affinity. He says God planned this, even before He created. In fact it was to be the goal of His creation. John says that we will be like Him, the Son, and because we will be, even now we purify ourselves, as he is pure (I John 3:3). Peter urges us to live lives of holiness, for, he says, the dross of impurity will be burned away, and only that which is holy will remain (II Peter 3:11-14). In the Revelation we read that ultimately the City of God will be pure, for she is the pure Bride of Christ, and that there will be nothing unclean which will enter into it. At the same time it will have a very rich traffic, for in it shall the nations of the earth walk, and the kings will bring their glory into it (Rev. 21:22-27). Peter says that the very heavens and earth shall be dissolved in a fire of cleansing, and John agrees that there will (thus) be a new heaven and a new earth. This will be inhabited by the saints, the holy ones of God.

All of this is very powerful, and stimulates our minds and hearts to see that holiness is not only desirable, but also indispensable. It is not only a mode to be lived, but the true goal of all true living.

2. A Holy Creation

What else could come from the hand of the Creator, but a holy universe? It comes from the hand of Him who was called 'Holy Father' (John 17:11), the One who dwells in 'unapproachable light'. No less must His Son be holy, who at His incarnation is called 'holy, the Son of God'. With them, as Creative Spirit is the one who is called 'The Holy Spirit' or, 'the Spirit of holiness'. From this Triune Godhead comes the entire universe. Thus the creation must be, every whit holy. Hence when Isaiah sees the vision of God, in the temple (Isaiah 6) the seraphim cries not only 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord', but also, 'The whole earth is filled with His glory', meaning that the earth is of Him who is holy. It, too, is in His holiness.

It is because of this that God is pleased with His creation, and calls it "Very good" (Gen. 1:31). Whilst much that is in it seems unclean, Paul can say, "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself: but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean", (cf. Titus 1:15). He says, similarly, in I Cor. 10:26 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it', and again (I Tim. 4:4) 'Everything created by God is good'. Jesus likewise showed that the created things, are not, of themselves, evil, for he said, 'Do you not see that whatsoever goes into a man, from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart, but his stomach, and so passes on?' Mark adds, 'Thus he (Jesus) declared all foods clean'. (Mark 7:18–19).

It is good to see that creationally, everything is holy and pure, otherwise we would be tempted to think that there was some deficiency in the universe, and for that matter a grave one. That is, that out of God's creating has come something evil which can and in fact does, infect the universe. This could only mean that God also is not truly holy.

We will see that evil, or impurity, does not lie in the things created, but has its genesis in the will. Impurity is something in the moral realm. We must recognise that creation in its over-all being is rational, and for its government rational beings are part of it – beings celestial and terrestrial. Where these obey the Creator fully, from their wills, the creative order of purity is maintained. Hence we can speak of the holy creation, that is, in its essential nature.

3. God, and His Holiness

Holiness, is, in the ultimate, conformity with God's will. This appears to be the same as righteousness, which is conformity to God's law. The law is the expression of God's will. It is also the functional way of the created universe, its laws and principles. True conformity to God's will must entail righteousness. We do say holiness is less than this, or other than this. However that disposition which seeks to conform to the will of God proceeds from the God Who is, Himself, holy. At the very best man must say, 'In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing'. Hence the holiness of God is of His essential being, whilst holiness which man may have is derived from God Himself. We can say that God's holiness is His essential being, His glory, His spotlessness. For practical purposes this is summed up in the saying of John "God is light; and in Him there is no darkness at all".

In the Old Testament the words 'holy' and 'holiness' derive from a Hebrew word (*quodosh*) which means to cut, or separate. Hence when in Isaiah 6 the Lord is 'high and lifted up', or as in Isaiah 57:15 is the 'high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy' we are to see His separation from man and the universe as indicative of His uniqueness of being, His being above what man and His universe are. This is the same concept as in Ephes. 4:6 where the Father is "above all". Such being ensures the reality, in which His creation can live. Yet in both Ephes. 4:6 and Isaiah 57:15, He is 'through all, and in all', and 'dwells with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit'. Another way of saying this is that God is not locked into His universe, and thus forced to be part of it, and subject to its moral failures, as also He is not locked out of it, and so unable to rule and control it for His own purposes and ends. In His holiness He is separate from it, yet always present to it, namely in ordering and ruling it for His own purposes.

Everything, then, in the universe, is holy, that is to say it is of Him, and belongs to Him for, 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'.

However, as we shall see, there has been rebellion against such holiness. Yet, the whole earth is still holy to the Lord in the sense that it is set apart for His purposes. Where rebellion has invaded there is moral unholiness, and in that sense the universe is not entirely holy. However even the unclean things of the Canaanites at Jericho could be said to be ‘holy unto the Lord’, that is they were to belong to Him. In such cases He destroyed them, lest they should contaminate His people.

Again the people of God were said to be unto Him a ‘holy nation’ and ‘a kingdom of priests’ (Exodus 19:5–6) amongst all the nations of the earth. Likewise the tabernacle (or, temple) and its furniture were said to be holy, or separated unto God in a special way. Hence we can see the word ‘holy’ (or ‘holiness’) has a variety of meanings, although all of them relate to things or persons or peoples being set apart for God. That is God is holy in Himself, but His ways of holiness involve His entire universe, hence His universe is involved in Him.

Further to this God's holiness is not simply a state of His being but rather is dynamic, in that it goes out actionally to achieve His purposes, and to destroy evil. Hence Habakkuk 1:13 says that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and that He cannot look upon evil, which far from meaning that He is squeamish or prudish when it comes to evil, actually means that He cannot see it without punishing it. Hence His holiness determines that all evil shall ultimately be destroyed and only purity shall obtain in His creation. Yet even this destruction of evil, is not simply the action of His holy wrath. Of course it is this, but more. His love, which is His essential nature is holy love, and sets about to redeem man, and to fulfil His purposes for His creation – His intended purposes. These are that His elect shall be His sons, and be ‘holy and blameless before Him’. Likewise the universe shall be renewed. That is why we say His love is dynamic and His holiness dynamic, and in the ultimate they are the one.

We can sum this up by saying that God's demand ‘**Be ye holy, for I am holy**’, is the intention of His holiness. He confronts man with the holiness of His life, that man may, having become holy participate in that life. In fact this is what it is to be truly (redeemed) man. See II Peter 1:3–4. As we have seen this is God's eternal intention and all of history must be understood in the light of this plan, and in the light of nothing else.

To sum up the holiness of God we can say then that God is separate from, that is above His creation, and in this He is known as holy. Yet He is present to all His creation, and His holiness is dynamic in that it possesses this creation, purposively. Finally, that holiness, in its actions, effects the release of the universe from uncleanness, and delineates the entire character of God as being that of holy love.

(N.B. Scriptures which speak of God's ‘aboveness’ are Gen. 28:16ff, I Sam. 6:19ff., II Sam. 6:6ff., Josh. 24:19 (narrative) and Isaiah 6, 57:15, Hos. 11:9, 12:1, Ezek. 1, Ezek. 28:25, 36:22, 38:23 (prophetic). Those which speak of His intention of the destruction of evil such as Hab. 1:13 Ezekiel 7:8, and passages which deal with cleansing (e.g. Ezek. 36:24–28) whilst those that deal with life are Deut. 7:6, Isa. 8:13, Lev. 11:44, 45, cf. I Peter 1:14ff, Exodus 19:5–6, cf. I Peter 2:9–10, Numbers 15:40 etc. In addition, as we shall see more fully, the redemptive passages such as Ezekiel 36:24–28, Jer. 31:31–38, and similar N.T. writings show the action of holiness (as e.g. in propitiation) in redeeming man and giving him the (holy) life he needs from God.)

4. Rebellion: The Attack Upon God and His Creation

(i) Rebellion Against God

God is holy. That is the revelation of God to man. It is His revelation to His entire universe. Isaiah 5:16 says 'The Lord is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness'. This must mean that God is known in His holiness where obedience is exercised by men. God is shown as holy where man obeys. In Numbers 20:12 when Moses did not obey God, by speaking to the rock, he did not sanctify God in the eyes of the people. (cf. Numbers 27:14). To say 'Hallowed be Thy name' is to say 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done', it is to say 'We pray that that day will come when all obey Your name' (cf. Phil 2:9–11). Hence to sanctify God is to obey Him. In this sense man's participation in holiness is his obedience. To sanctify the Lord in one's heart, is to obey Him, to submit to His person. See I Peter 3:15, with Isaiah 8:13 – 'the Lord of hosts, him shall you regard as holy: let him be your fear, and let him be your dread'.

Satan's temptation to man that, by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would be as God was the irreverent, impure assumption, that out of his innate resources he could be as God. This was in the line of Satan's own pride 'I shall be like the Most High God' (cf. Isaiah 14:14). Thus all disobedience must be looked upon as impurity. All rebellion, pride, and acts out of conformity with the will of God must be seen as unclean. We have to say this because often we identify impurity with sexual excesses and perversions. Man's sanctifying of God is in his obedience; it can be said that all wrong relationships with God, with oneself, one's fellow beings, and with the universe created by God are, by nature of the case impure, that is they constitute unholiness.

In L.F.S. Study 5 we saw that there was rebellion amongst both heavenly and earthly authorities which God had constituted, the result of which was moral chaos. To put it in another way we can say that the will of man once free to obey God – has now become perverted. It is orientated towards obeying Satan (cf. John 8:44, I John 5:19, Ephes. 2:1–3). It is involved in uncleanness.

The attack must not simply be seen as an attack upon God, but upon His purposes, also, for the universe. Whilst these purposes may have been partly concealed (cf. Rom. 16:25–26, Ephes. 3:8–11), yet also God has revealed them by His prophets (cf. Acts 3:21, Rev. 10:7, Amos 3:7), and it is conceivable that the angels shouted with joy at creation, not only because of its actuation, but also because of God's purposes for it. Hence the attack upon God is an attack upon His purpose which is to have a pure creation, a pure angelic hierarchy, and a pure family of men, at the end of the age. This is what makes so diabolic the impurity of evil. A reading of Romans 1:19–32 will show how horribly evil is the distortion of the creational realities; and how perverse the rebellion of man, and hence how impure he has become both in nature and action.

(ii) The Deceit of Evil

(a) Satan 's Deceit

Jesus spoke of those who thought they had light within them, and said 'If the light that is within you be darkness, how great is that darkness!' It would seem impossible to be so deceived. Yet it is. Satan does not merely attack the holiness of God, but he seeks to make God's holiness appear to be impure, and his own impurity to be the true essential holiness.

It is because of this he has been called ‘the deceiver’, and it is said of him that he goes out to deceive the whole world, and, in fact does deceive it. See Revelation 12:9, 2:3, 8, 10, II Cor. 4:4, I John 5:19 etc. He deceived man into thinking he would not die, and that he could actually be as God, knowing good and evil. Hence Paul's concern in II Cor. 11, that believers should not be thus seduced.

(b) The Deceit of Sin

Isaiah speaks of those who make light darkness, and darkness light, bitterness sweetness and sweetness bitterness, and think that they are wise (Isaiah 5:20–21). In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer warns of the deceit of sin (3:13–14). This deceitful is that first it is not sin, and then, that it does not matter. Paul could say ‘For sin, taking opportunity in the commandment, deceived me, and by it, killed me’.

Sin in its active nature expresses itself in the lusts of man. Paul calls these ‘the deceitful lusts’. Even within these lusts, John tells us, there were those who said ‘we have no sin’. John says that such ‘deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them’. This indicates the treacherous nature of all evil.

(c) The Deceit of Idolatry

John warns against love of the world, its lusts of the flesh and of the eyes, and its pride of life. He is warning against idolatry (cf. I John 2:15–16, 5:21). He says that such who love this way do not have the love of the Father within them. Idols deceive their devotees into believing they will receive much from them, but Moses warned, ‘Beware lest there be among you a man or a woman or a family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go to serve the gods of those nations, lest a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one, who when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, and blesses himself in his heart saying, ‘I shall be safe though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart’.

We conclude that the evil system set up by Satan seeks to delude the universe into thinking that God is, in fact, the evil one, and that the alternative order of things is the genuine reality. Were man able to hide his hideous impurity he would be paralysed with shock. As it is he says the holiness of God is of no great import. Eccles. 8:11 explains, ‘Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil’. Psalm 10:13 asks, ‘Why does the wicked renounce God, and say in his heart, ‘Thou wilt not call it to account?’

5. God's Action In His Holiness

Without doubt God attacks evil, and, ultimately, destroys it. However we should not see this attack simply as ridding Himself of an intruding enemy. It is more than that, for He has determined to create His holy people. Hence not only will He vindicate Himself by purging His universe, and so magnifying His own holiness, but He will in fact fulfil His primary purpose of having His elect before Him ‘holy and blameless’. This, even more than the destruction of evil, as such, will show His glory and hence, His holiness, that is to say, His holy love. This lines up with what we said previously that His holiness is dynamic in that it destroys evil, and in that it confronts man with life – the life of God in which man is to participate – ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy’.

(i) The People of God

The mode of this holiness is, as we will see, the action of God in the Cross. However even this is in context with His action of making for Himself a people who are holy. This is not a small remnant but "a multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, and people, kindred, tribe and tongue". Out of these nations shall come the kings who bring their glory into the eternal Holy City. This great multitude is to bless itself by the name of Abraham, the man who understood the holiness of God, for of him, God said, 'He obeyed by voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws (Gen. 26:5).

Israel is the chosen people of God, and chosen to be holy. This is seen in Deut. 7:6 – 'For you are a people holy to the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth'. They are told 'Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. (Exodus 19:5–6). It is in this context that the people are sanctified, and must also sanctify themselves (Exod. 19: 10ff.) and that the tabernacle, the furniture, the people, and even their spoils are holy unto the Lord. The priesthood is sanctified, in fact all are sanctified within this commonwealth of God. The nations shall come to know this. (Ezek. 37:28).

This people of God, however, is not confined to Israel. Ezekiel 37 opens on a wider scene. I Peter 2:9–10 says that the Gentiles are now included, and the books of Acts shows that the Abrahamic Covenant all embracing for the nations, from Jerusalem, all Judea, through Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth. Paul, in Galatians chs. 3–4 shows that the true children of Abraham are men of faith. Hence the New Testament speaks about the saints, that is the same holy people of God, thus fulfilling, at least in part the promises with Daniel 7 that the Kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High. The ultimate, promised in Ephesians 1:4, is seen in the ingathering of this holy people, the true Israel of God.

(ii) The Modes of Holiness

(a) Jesus

The sons of God, those of Israel are holy to the Lord; they are holy sons (Deut. 14:1–2). At the same time Israel is the holy son (cf. Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1). Israel, at core, constitutes the holy seed out of which comes the ultimate deliverance from evil. Hence Hosea 11:1 is applied to Jesus (Matt. 2:14). The Father sanctifies this Son and sends him into the world (John 10:36) for the work of redemption. He is called 'holy, the Son of God' (Luke 1:35), and he is 'the holy one of God' (Mark 1:24, John 6:69, Luke 4:34, and Rev. 3:7). He is also the 'holy servant (or, child) of God' (Acts 3:14, 4:27, 30). None of this is pointing to the innate holiness of Jesus. It is saying he is chosen and sanctified by God for the task he is to accomplish. His coming, then, is one of the modes by which God works, or, better still the mode by which He works.

(b) Destruction of Guilt: Defeat of Evil

Whilst Jesus, as Messiah, personally acts against evil (Cf. Acts 10:38) through forgiveness, exorcisms, healings and the like, yet his primary work is to defeat the entire works of Satan (I John 3:8), and set men free (Heb. 2: 14–15). He is given the people of God, the elect (Hebrews 2:11–14), and he

becomes one with them, liberating them.

This liberation, however, will not be seen, except by understanding both the deceiving and enslaving nature of guilt. Hebrews 2:14–15, I Cor. 15: 55–56, and I John 4:18 show that man is in fear of death, and in this fear through guilt is under Satan's bondage. A reading of Gen. 3:10, Col. 1:21, Rom. 5:10, 1: 31, and Ephes. 2:3 will reveal that man hates God because of his guilt. In fact guilt is the very power of sin, and so it deceives man into having a distorted view of God: it keeps him in fear of judgement and death; and it compels him to go on sinning.

Guilt is very powerful, and the most devastating thing man experiences within his being. It ravages his mind and body (cf. Psalm 31:10, 32:3–4, 38:1–8, Isaiah 57:21 etc.) and keeps him in impurity and bondage. Hence he is always in bondage to evil; always implicated in impurity. If guilt is not destroyed then impurity remains dynamic in God's universe. To free the universe from bondage, guilt must be destroyed. –When death has no sting (sin; its guilt through the law) then it has no victory. When man has no guilt then sin, and death, Satan, his world powers, and the law can no longer have power over their former victim. He is set free, and the lever and power of evil is neutralised.

(c) The Cleansing of Impurity

Psalm 51 is a brilliant and classical demonstration of the slavery of man by impurity. The subject of this psalm feels himself to be enslaved by his own impurity. He knows that God desires truth in the inward parts, i.e. that at core God desires total purity. Hence he prays, 'Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and put a new and right spirit within me', as also he cries, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'. He is evidently at one with Isaiah (see chapter six) where that one cries out, 'I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lipsfor, my eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts!'

Cleansing is a particular promise of God to His people. When Israel has failed to sanctify God in the eyes of the heathen (the other nations) then God will sanctify Himself in those eyes by cleansing Israel. This is the message of Ezekiel 36:23, 20:41, 38:16, 23, 39:7 and other passages. Ezekiel 36:24–28 shows that it will be through Israel being cleansed, and so walking in obedience before God. The other side of this will be God coming in judgement upon the nations who have rejected Him, and sought to destroy Israel. Again there are positive promises of renewal. These are seen in Ezekiel 11:18–20, 36:26, Jer. 31:31–34 etc. This includes the promise of a new heart and a new Spirit. These promises appear to be both personal and national. There are other promises such as in Zechariah 13:1 and Isaiah 4:4 of a cleansing to come. This is not to ignore the cleansing which was innate in the covenant with Israel, which was a ritual cleansing (cf. Numbers 19: 14–ff, Hebrews 9:13), but it points to a new cleansing which will redeem Israel nationally, and bring a new day to God's people.

When John the Baptist came promising forgiveness of sins, and pointing to Jesus (Messiah) as the one who would cleanse the sin, not only of Israel, but of the world, he was pointing to the fulfilment of the promises concerning the Kingdom, as also the cleansing of the heart. Jesus' claim that his blood was for this cleansing, or remission of sins, was fortified after his resurrection when he spoke of the message now being universal for all nations i.e. the remission of sins for those who would receive such through repentance. As we shall see this cleansing is the very basis of sanctification, or true holiness.

(d) The Cross: The Act of Cleansing

Hebrews 1:3 says 'When he had made purification for sins he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high'. This is the definitive act; he accomplishes the total cleansing of all sins. The theme is repeated in Hebrews especially in 9:14, 26, 10:12–18, 22. His blood is said to perpetually effect cleansing (I John 1:7) and passages such as I Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:5, Ephes. 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 infer that forgiveness and cleansing are identical.

Whilst we cannot understand the mystery of his suffering, nor effectively examine the mode of that sin-bearing, we do know that he bore our sins in his body, on the tree, that he was made sin for us, and that he offered himself through the eternal Spirit, and that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. That this was a true and full propitiation is indicated by many Scriptures, and that it was totally effective for the entire cleansing of a repentant person is also indicated. Thus cleansing ('the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit') is the basis on which the people of God are constituted as His saints. Thus Paul 'washes away his sins' in baptism, and others know them to be 'blotted out', so that forgiveness of sins is the means whereby the new heart is implanted in place of the old. See Acts 22:16, 3:19, 2:38, Hebrews 10: 16–22, cf. Jer. 31:31–34. The basis of true holiness has been laid.

(iii) The Gift of Holiness: Man's Reception

The action of the Cross in destroying the defilement of man, and in taking away the guilt has to become the effected work in man through repentance and faith, and the gift of forgiveness. The New Testament pictures man as repenting when the word of truth comes to him. When he repents towards God and has faith in Jesus Christ, then he receives the effectual forgiveness of sins, and the cleansing of his conscience. His sins are washed away; they are blotted out; they are remitted. He is now free of guilt, of condemnation. He is undefiled. He is holy because he is cleansed of defilement. He is sanctified because he now is one of God's people. Passages such as Romans 6:1–14, Col. 3:1–5, Gal. 2:20 show that this work is completed, but that its fullness for a person continues to be a matter of faith. The one so washed, justified and sanctified (I Cor. 6:9–11) must continue to live by faith, not just in order to appropriate, but rather to live in the cleansing which has been effected.

6. The Way of Holiness

It is often said that the believer is positionally holy, but that he must become that conditionally, meaning that his condition must become parallel with his position. This is not a helpful way of speaking. It is better to see that the believer has been forgiven, justified, sanctified, adopted into sonship, given the gift of the Spirit, placed into membership with the whole Body, the Church, and is part of the people of God. This helps him to see that holiness of life will not be an individualistic endeavour, that the basis for a life of obedience is based upon forgiveness, and that he is aided by the Spirit who indwells, and by the members of the Body of which he also is a member. Any consideration of holiness which sets a standard, and demands a work which originates from the believer is doomed to failure, as the effort is certain also to be legalistic.

(i) The Way of Holiness is Love

Obedience and love in the N.T. (and in the old also) are from love (e.g. John 14:15, II Cor. 5:14). Even more, obedience and love are the one (I John 5:3, cf. II John 5–6). Hence when we are loved we love (I John 4:19). When we love we obey; when we obey love is operative. The first response of love comes from total cleansing and forgiveness (Luke 7:47–48, I John 4:10, 19). If forgiveness is not seen as total God's love will not be seen as total, and so there will be no response of love. It is the Holy Spirit who makes such love total to us (Rom. 5:5) by revealing the Cross, and so the Son and the Father to us (John 16:12–15). Hence we love, and hence we obey. This comes through clearly from I Peter 1:22, and I Timothy 1:5. In Isaiah 6 we see that Isaiah, cleansed from impurity and guilt is glad to obey. This is the dynamic order of things.

We ought to beware of a doled-out forgiveness, or a dribs-and-drabs "grace", where true freedom to obey must be greatly restricted.

Secondly we must be aware that love, in fact, is known and expressed in relationships. Hence obedience to God springs from our discovery and experience of being sons of Him, as Father. This also places us into the brotherhood of believers, the membership of Christ's Body, and these relationships are dynamic and evocative of obedience.

If holiness is looked upon as a goal to be reached, and a standard to be achieved, rather than a life to be lived – and that as normative – then it will become a legalistic striving, and will entail strangling guilts through failure, and a return to the 'works syndrome', with the old round of self-justifying actions. Love is the motivating power for obedience, the constraint which disciplines, and the manner of obedience itself.

(ii) The Way of Holiness is Faith

Release from guilt, and the evil powers, as also from sin is based upon the work of Christ at the Cross and in the Resurrection. In I Cor. 6:9–11 (cf. Titus 3:5) the action of the Cross is seen to be total and definitive. This enables Paul to say 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creation' (II Cor. 5:17). Faith, of course, must rise up to that fact, and whilst faith does not make the work of the Cross (through the Spirit) to be total, because the work, in itself is total, yet it enables the man of faith to 'get the good of it'. He has to see what has been done, and live consistently with that. That is why it is said that 'The just shall live by faith'. That is why Paul must remind the Galatians that "faith-way" is the only true way of Christian living. It is also why he tells the Romans that they must see themselves as dead (legally) to sin, and to be alive to God, and hence to refuse to yield their members to sin, but to yield them only to righteousness. He means that faith sees the liberation of the Gospel, and lives accordingly. Faith does not require to be constantly fortified by emotions and experiences. If these come - well and good – but if they do not, then that does not matter. We are encouraged in this understanding by seeing in Acts 15:9 that God through the Holy Spirit 'cleansed their hearts by faith'. That is the Gentiles became holy through faith. Again in Acts 26:18 the Gentiles are to join the Jews more 'who are sanctified by faith in me.'

(iii) The Way of Holiness is Mortification

Mortification means ‘putting to death’ or, ‘causing to die’. Col. 3:5 speaks of putting to death one's members, and also Romans 8:13 speaks in similar vein. If these two passages are looked at in their context the following will emerge:– On the Cross Christ bore our sins. He also bore our old humanity and put it to death. That is he withdrew the power of evil when he suffered the guilt of human sins. By doing so He broke the grip of evil (Col. 2:14–15, Heb. 2:14–15). Hence when any form of evil comes to attack or seduce or seek to control the believer he must mortify it, knowing that it has already been mortified upon the Cross.

This raises the problem of the passage of Romans 7:13–24. In Romans 6, especially verses 12–14 it seems that sin has been defeated and whilst indwelling, that the believer can have victory over it. This is correct. However in Romans 7:13ff, it appears that Paul is saying that sin is stronger than he is. This is also correct. The explanation is not that here is a non-Christian, or a barren and bereft believer (‘a wilderness experience’!) but Paul finding that of himself he has no power over sin. Strictly speaking there should be no believer who is ‘of himself’. However one can seek, of oneself, to be victorious, and this will prove fruitless. Hence, when in Romans 8:13 Paul says, ‘If you, through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live’, he is speaking of mortification not of oneself, but of the Spirit. Only in this case is mortification successful. See also Romans 8:37, I Cor. 4:20, Phil. 4:13. Gal. 5:16–18 tells us that to walk by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14) means lust shall not prevail over us, and we will not be caught up in fleshly legal striving.

The subject of mortification must be approached in a healthy way. The statement ‘I die daily’ has often been taken to mean a personal daily mortification. The context of this verse (I Cor. 15:29–34) means that Paul, because he preaches the Gospel, stands in jeopardy of death every day. This is the burden also of II Cor. 4:7–12. There is no need to read mystical death into these. Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:1–2 and similar passages speak of death (crucifixion) as being in the past.

This is why we say that faith is the mode by which we live, and by which we mortify.

(iv) The Way of Holiness is Vivification

‘Because of his death ... life!’ This is the principle of the Cross and the Resurrection, as seen in Galatians 2:20. Romans 8:13 says, in effect, ‘For every mortification – vivification!’ Mortification is by no means negative, for it is destroying that which is in itself a negating force. Hence mortification is positive. Nor should we be led to think it is dull and morbid, but rather vitalising. When in Col. 3:9–10 Paul says, ‘Put them all away – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk, from your mouth. Do not lie one to another, seeing you have put off the old humanity with its practices, and have put on the new humanity which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator’, he is speaking of the powerlessness of evil because of the Cross, and the given power of the believer, by the Spirit. He is telling us – ‘There are things you can put off, if you will’. He is also saying ‘There are things you can put on – if you will’. The things one can put on such as ‘....compassion, lowliness, meekness and patience’ help us in ‘forbearing one another, and if any one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven

you, so you also must forgive. And above all these things put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony'. Thus to truly put off (evil) is equally to put on (the good).

A similar word to 'put off' is 'shun'. 'Shun all attempts at getting riches' (I Tim. 6:9ff) leads to 'aim at godliness, righteousness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness ... fight the good fight of faith'. Again the principle is in II Tim. 2:22 – 'Shun youthful passions, and aim at righteousness, faith, love and peace', along with all those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart'.

(v) The Way of Holiness is Indwelling

John 14:15–23 speaks of three who indwell the believer:– The Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son. This indwelling is borne out by passages such as Romans 8:9–11, Matthew 10:20, Gal. 4:6, Ephes. 3:14–16. It is true that God dwells in us (I John 4:12,13). Hence all the powers of the three Persons of the Trinity are there to assist us in holiness of living. Christ in us is the hope of (ultimate) glory. The Spirit in us is the hope of justification (Gal. 5:6) and bodily resurrection (Rom. 8:11), whilst the Father aids us in the ministry He gives to us (Matt. 10:20).

It is true to say that 'the power which worketh in us' (Ephes. 3:20, Phil. 2:13) is Personal, i.e. God Himself. For this reason we should not think of ourselves as working alone, or being left to work alone. We can be confident that 'He who has begun a good work within you will (Himself) go on completing it, right up until the day of Jesus Christ'. (Phil. 1:6). This knowledge of indwelling, as the indwelling Himself should be all the encouragement we need for the pursuit of holiness. This is so especially when we fight the battle of faith against Satan (Ephes. 6:10f, James 4:7, I Peter 5:8–9) because 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world' (I John 4:4)

(vi) The Way of Holiness is Overcoming

Here we are partly repeating what has been said when discussing faith and holiness ('(ii)' above). This, however has directly to do with Satanic onslaughts and temptation. Satan has been defeated at the Cross (Heb. 2: 14–15, Col. 2:14–15). He has no hold over the children of God, but he seeks to regain it. He is to be resisted in faith (I Peter 5:8–9, James 4:6–7). This faith arises from meekness – 'Submit yourselves under the almighty hand of God'. It is faith in what Christ has done, hence in Revelation 12:10ff, we see Satan as the Accuser, but overcome by the blood of the Cross, the word of testimony, because there is no fear of death. Whilst onslaughts come 'we are more than overcomers through him who loved us'.

Temptation is, virtually, testing. This we need not fear. God will not allow us to come into any temptation too great to resist. He will make a way out – if we will take it! I Cor. 10:12–13 warns us against standing in our own (imagined) strength, but encourages us to believe God will assist us in any temptation. James encourages us to go through temptations (testings did not Jesus have them in large number?) because they mature us. Where we lack wisdom in them, he says, God will give us wisdom, if we ask (1:27).

Temptations are of various kinds. We are tempted to fear, to do evil things, to be seduced. Lusts can be 'of the mind' or, 'of the flesh' (Ephes.

2:3). It is good to understand that holiness is not a ritual thing, but a moral action. By this we mean that nothing of itself is unclean, and that the body is not evil. Hence the normal desires of the body for food, drink, a good temperature etc. are not evil or wrong. Hence there is nothing evil in eating (Cf. I Tim. 4:1–4). However it is the control of the faculties of the mind and body which constitutes either evil or holiness. To eat is good; to go beyond a point in eating can constitute gluttony. To look is good; to go beyond a point of looking can constitute ‘the lust of the eyes’, and so on. Temptation (or, testing) would take us beyond such a point, if we were willing to go. Hence we are ‘to put to death the deeds of the body’ not the good deeds of normal eating and drinking, but that element which would tip us over from the good to the evil. This is really another way of talking about mortification and vivification.

The very positive view is to see that giving in to temptation brings guilt, distress, and an imbalance in life. This will be harmful for the person, – both in mind and body. Hence self-control is a positive thing. It is neither asceticism on the one hand, or looseness on the other. It is the true norm for living. Holiness is very positive, very healthful.

(vii) The Way of Holiness is Relational

In the first chapter of his first epistle, John speaks of God being Light. This chapter talks of walking in the light, and of believers having fellowship with the Father and the Son, and one another. The life of light (purity) is that of fellowship. The remainder of the epistle develops this theme light against darkness, love against hate. Hence holiness is basically a matter of relationships! A similar idea is developed in the epistle to the Ephesians. Chapters 4 and 5 show that true walking in love is to reject darkness in any form. Again, very intimately, God loves His people, and in the O.T. idolatry is spoken of as adultery. In other words true love and obedience to God constitute true holiness – a point which we made at the commencement of this study.

In Hebrews 12:14–17 the writer places peace (reconciliation) with all men, and holiness, as being together. One must ‘strive’ for both, and not allow a ‘root of bitterness’ to spring up. That root of bitterness must be in regard to relationships, and it can defile true holiness. The root of bitterness is a quote from Deut. 29:18f., and refers to idolatry which is a break in relationships with God, and brings terrible defilement.

On the practical level, life is constituted of relationships, and so holiness is walking in light, which is relating in love to God, one's self, and one's fellow creatures. It is also relating truly to the things of the creation.

The positive side or relating in love is that it gives one the sense of true being, is positive, and encourages in a life of wholesome living. Strictly speaking holiness should never be a goal in itself but the spin-off of living normatively as a child of God.

(viii) The Way of Holiness is Discipline

Discipline is really the life of discipleship, and discipleship is the life of the pupil, the undistracted learner. In this case both mortification

and overcoming, which we have treated, are elements of discipline. We have pointed out that these are not accomplishments of the believer. They are stimulated by that love which issues from the freedom given through forgiveness. When we are aware that they cannot be accomplished in natural human strength, then there is no danger in proceeding with discipline. When Paul says 'The love of Christ constrains me,' he literally means that it controls or disciplines him. Thus when he says (I Cor. 9:24–27) 'I pommel my body, and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified', he is talking of a control of the body which is necessary. Similarly in writing to Timothy (II Tim. 2:3–6) he speaks of the Christian life as that of a soldier, or an athlete. Both require training or "hardness" ("training"). Hence discipline is refusing to allow any part of one's personality to dominate and overrule another. The body must be subject to true holiness of operation; the mind must continually be renewed, and never be allowed to inject lustfulness into the life of the person.

For Paul the Lordship of Christ is at once universal ('Lord of all') and personal (Romans 7:14). One is not carving out a discipline without an object. One is subject to Christ's Lordship. Hence this Lordship is purposive, and its control motivates to abstinence from evil without becoming wrongly ascetic.

The discipline is also positive. Paul says "...whatsoever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, gracious...think on these' (Phil. 4:8). The build-up in the mind comes, not only from rejecting things of darkness, but admitting into it, the things of light. This kind of discipline of which we talk, then, is not excruciating, but positive and fruitful, and in line with Christ's reference to the discipleship he demanded, 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light'. Hence Paul, after describing the strong pressures and opposition which came upon him, could speak of 'this light affliction'. Such discipline gives the subject of it a sense of cleanness and strong life. He is not beset by the 'little guilts' and the uneasiness of a life lived in self indulgence.

(ix) The Way of Holiness is Doing the Will of God

We repeat that holiness is doing the will of God – from the heart. This will is clear enough in Scripture. For created man it is doing the creational command to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it, having dominion over it. For redeemed man it is this and more. It is preaching the Gospel to every creature, making disciples of all nations, and giving the message of repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. We have said that the question of holiness relates to the will. Repentance is, in effect, taking total responsibility for all that one has ever done and been, and seeing the magnificent forgiveness and cleansing that God has effected. Thus the will is free, in love, to pursue the path of holiness, i.e. obedience.

It must be seen at the same time (see 'God's people' and 'Hope' below) that such obedience from the heart comes only because the redeemed are the sons of God. As Jesus' Sonship was one of willing obedience, so those who are led by the Spirit of God are truly the sons of God. This will of the Father has two aspects:

- (a) For the sons to become and remain clean, and
- (b) For them to share with the Father in His plan for creation

i.e. to draw men and women to Him, through the message of redemption. Passages which should be studied are I Peter 1:14–17, Romans 8:14–17, John 20:19–23. What must be seen very clearly is that merely to concentrate on ‘not–sinning’ is a fruitless effort. As we have seen above, holiness is the spin off of the obedience of the sons of God to their Father. To be busy in the will of God helps us to avoid the works of idleness, and the self–indulgences of laziness.

(x) The Way of Holiness Relates to God's People

Whilst we have spoken of this, we need to collect our thoughts, and distil a principle. God has set about to effect His holy people. He has redeemed us from Adamic rebellion and its results. He has brought us under the cover of the Abrahamic Covenant, known in this age as ‘the New Covenant’. The Holy people of God (Israel) now contains the hitherto unholy Gentiles (nations) and constitute the true Israel. In the ultimate repentant Israel is contained in this, as also the repentant Gentiles. They constitute a new humanity in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile. This people will ultimately be before Him ‘holy and blameless’. Meanwhile they are known as ‘saints’, and to them will be given the Kingdom (Daniel 7, cf. Luke 22:29). Peter can speak of them (I Peter 2:9–10) in the terms of Exodus 19:5–6. They are now ‘a holy nation’. Rev. 5:10 repeats this thought, saying that they will reign upon the earth.

Personal holiness is never, simply, personal: it is holiness known in the corporate experience of the people of God. One is aided, encouraged, and admonished (cf. Ephes. 5:18–20, Col. 3:14–17, etc.). Thus one is aided to walk in holiness.

(xi) The Way of Holiness is in Hope

Without doubt hope is an enormous dynamic. Romans 8:18–30 shows us this to be so. What God is may be known from what He has done. Faith operates on these facts, and lives in expectancy of their continuation. Hope looks to the summation of these activities. Hope draws us on.

That the people of God will be holy is the thrust of prophecy and promise. Because of the promise God's people purify themselves. Hence we repeat the Scriptures of II Peter 3:10ff, I John 3:1–3, Revelation 21 and 22, 7:9–14. These speak of the purity to come, and encourage us to participate in it now. II Cor. 6:14 – 7:1 likewise talks of us being the sons and daughters of the living God, and so separating from darkness and walking in light. It encourages us now to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

Hope is connected with call, or, vocation. Phil. 1:6 says that God will complete what He has begun. I Thess. 4:1–8 explains that God's will is our sanctification, and that we have been called unto this. It enjoins practical holiness. The prayer of I Thess. 5:23 for present and continuing holiness is accompanied by ‘He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it’. Again election and vocation are the dynamic for the obedience of holiness.

Two passages – I Peter 1:1–2, and II Thess. 2:13 align themselves with Ephesians 1:3–5, showing that God had predestined His people to holiness. In these cases sanctification precedes salvation as such. We were sanctified

by the Spirit. We have to understand that God had moved before we did, for our sanctification. This is much the same as in the case of Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Paul (cf. Jer. 1:4–5, Luke 1:15, Gal. 1:15–16) that God had purposed such being ‘set apart’ for Himself. This recalls the truth that everything is holy to the Lord, but in particular when He sets apart, He accounts as holy, and He makes holy. A study of Hebrews 9:11–14, with 2:11, and I Cor. 6:11. will help to explain why God's people are holy, and will throw light on I Cor. 7:12–16 where one partner is the cause of the sanctification of the family, for God has chosen this to be so.

Hope, we repeat, is of the assured end and goal of God's people as holy. Because of this we press on in holiness, never making it a legalistic work, never sitting lightly to obedience as do the antinomians, and never finding it an intolerable burden, as do the nomists.

In fact, it is not primarily our hope of purity which is the basic drive, but because we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God – to see that, and to be part of that.

7. The Fruits of Holiness

Paul says (Romans 6:20–22, ‘When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what fruit did you have from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free, and have become slaves of God, the fruit you have is sanctification, and its outcome, eternal life’. Someone has said that sanctification is glorification begun, and glorification is sanctification completed.

The true fruit of holiness is that we see God. Passages such as Matthew 5:8, Psalms 24:3–4, 18:26, Hebrew 12:14 tell us that to be pure is to see God. Hence ‘To the pure in heart all things are pure’ (Titus 1:15). That is why, one day, we shall be before Him ‘holy and blameless’.

It is the heart of the unclean which dreads the sight of God. The heart of the holy child of God rejoices. Man's deepest anguish issues from his pollution. His deepest joy and love issues ‘from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith’ (I Tim. 1:5). The highest see His face. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’.
