

shew Thyself. As to the so frequent repentance of God, Samuel the prophet gives us a typical example. He also says: *The Strength, or the Rock, of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent.* But he afterwards, using the same words, says: *And the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.* But we must be careful not to carry this explanation too far. There is a real, and not merely a conventional, difference between the attributes of the absolute Godhead and the attributes created, or the manifestation of which is created, by the creation itself and with it. We cannot understand this; nor can we understand the Incarnation. We cannot fathom the mystery that the *God of eternity*, אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם, inhabits time also, and waits on its processes as *the God of patience*; nor can we fathom the mystery that the impassible God should mourn and rejoice, and be angry. It is a relief to us to see that in His Son incarnate God does tabernacle with us, and rejoice with us who rejoice, and weep with us who weep. The Old-Testament anthropopathy may be an anticipation of the New-Testament reality. Or—and perhaps it is better to say this—the New-Testament exhibition of a God clothed with human morality, and of like sinless passions with ourselves, may be only the manifestation unto perfection of a mystery that was before unmanifested.

1 Sam. xv
29, 36.

Gen. xxi.
33.
Rom. xv.
5.

HOLINESS AND LOVE THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

Holiness
and Love

The manifestation of God in His moral government has in every age made prominent two classes of attributes which have for their root and principle respectively the holiness and the love of the Supreme: His holiness, which separates Him from us, and His love, which nevertheless communicates itself to the sinner. The Nevertheless here points to the most essential and profound mystery of the Atonement.

1. Throughout the Old Testament we mark the ascendancy of these two perfections in their mysterious, and as yet not fully explained, union and harmony. The beginning of revelation displays the righteous anger of God against sin, and His gracious dealings with the sinner; but it was not until the Jehovah of the covenant-people laid the foundations of the Theocracy, the formal

Old Testa-
ment.

- preparative for the full redeeming economy, that the two leading attributes were placed in their correlative position. The first reference to the Divine holiness is in connection with the giving of the Law. He is never the Holy One in Genesis; but at the very commencement of His redeeming relation to the typical people, He is *glorious in holiness*. But the holiness of the *jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, is blended with the love of the same God *showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments*. When Jehovah renewed His covenant, after the first violation of it, the two leading attributes are again made prominent in His revelation of His name and glory. But the love now comes first. *The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty*.
- Ex. xv. 11. Ex. xx. 5, 6. What this meant was then further explained: *Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is JEALOUS, is a jealous God*. Throughout the remainder of the Old-Testament economy the two great families of attributes belong respectively to Him of whom Joshua said *He is an holy God; He is a jealous God*, and, to the *Lord God, merciful and gracious*. Sometimes the families of attributes are kept apart; sometimes they are united, and their union, through the propitiation typified in the Temple, distinguishes the Psalms and the prophets who anticipate the Gospel. *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His HOLY NAME*: this leads the way in the Psalm; but mercy takes up the strain and continues it to the end. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*. This may represent the psalmists: let Hosea stand for the prophets. *Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee*. It will be observed that the holiness and the mercy are so blended in these passages, and others like them, that it might seem as if they crossed hands: the holiness forgiving the sin and not the mercy. This has misled many theologians who forget that the union of the two attributes, and not their confusion, is the glory of redemp-
- Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. Ex. xxxiv. 14. Josh. xxiv. 19. Ex. xxxiv. 6. Ps. ciii. 1. Ps. ciii. 8. Hos. xi. 8, 9.

tion. Apart from this, however, it is plain that throughout the Old Testament the holiness and the mercy of God are supreme: on these two hang all the redeeming attributes.

2. Assuredly it is the same in the New Testament. To illustrate this would anticipate the whole doctrine of the Atonement. Suffice that our Lord and His Apostles gave the same pre-eminence to the two attributes. In St. John's Gospel the Saviour begins by *God so loved the world* and ends with *Holy Father!* St. Paul makes *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, the God of holiness, and the free offer of His *grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, the keynotes of the whole Evangelical system. St. John, in his First Epistle, which is the last revelation of the Bible, singles out the two Divine perfections, Holiness and Love, for the definition of what may be called the moral nature of God. These two are the only terms which unite in one the attributes and the essence of God. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that GOD IS LIGHT, and in Him is no darkness at all.* The revelation of the Word incarnate is the supreme Holiness of God: He is Himself the glory of all goodness, and the negation of all that is not good. A second revelation of the Word is this: **GOD IS LOVE.** Never before in all the Scriptures had this attribute been identified with the very being of God: prophets and apostles, and the Son Himself, had approached this truth, but had not spoken it; but St. John here gives the bold and blessed interpretation of their meaning. These two perfections we may then consider in the true order which the Apostle indicates, and show their harmony in redemption.

New Testament

John iii
16
John xvii.
11.
Rom. ii. 5.
Rom. iii.
24.
Attributes
in Re-
demption.
1 John i.
5.

1 John
iv. 8

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

Holiness

That absolute perfection which belongs to God in His eternal essence is, in His moral relations with creatures in whom sin is possible or present, who are to be kept from sin or saved from it, Holiness: His nature is the sum and the standard of all goodness; and it is eternally opposed to all that is not good in the creature. Thus the term unites the positive and negative ideas: always with latent or

avowed reference to what is or may be contrary to the Divine will.

Separation from
Creaturally
Evil.

1. That God is holy expresses the perfection of moral excellence as existing in Him alone, the emphasis lying on the alone, whence it follows that every approach to Him must be marked by reverence and awe.

Ex. xv.
11.

Rev. xv.
4.

(1.) The first time the attribute is given to Him this idea appears: *Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* And also the last time: *Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy!* Through a multitude of intermediate passages there runs the invariable meaning that God by His holiness is marked off from every human being: alone in His moral perfection, in the presence of which all faces gather blackness and all creatures are convicted of impurity. This meaning of the word as referred to God is too often forgotten: holiness is regarded as synonymous with perfection generally, without the concomitant of separation from evil; or it is by some, in the interest of a special theology, made to mean the opposite of what it really means, the communicative goodness of the Deity.

Ground
of Adora-
tion.

Ps. cxi. 9.
Ps. lxxi.
22.

(2.) Hence, that God is קָדוֹשׁ, resplendent in the glory of unshared holiness, and ἅγιος, fearful in His sanctity, is the special ground of the peculiar adoration of the creature, especially of the sinful creature. *Holy and reverend is His name!* His name in the worship of His people is the *Holy One of Israel*. It is this attribute which surrounds with awful glory God in His temple, whether the heavens or the temple of earth. Righteousness attends Him in His judicial court; but holiness belongeth to His house, which is therefore His sanctuary, the Holy place; where He takes refuge from all unholiness, while He provides the expiatory means by virtue of which the unholy may approach Him. It is emphatically seen in the trisagion of Isaiah's mystical temple; in the dread which seized the heart of the worshipper; and in the purifying of his lips that he might join in the worship of the angels. This leads us to notice that it is the attribute of the Triune as an object of worship: *Holy, holy, hclly.*

Isa. vi. 3.

is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory! to which the New-Testament echo is: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come!* Hence it is obvious to observe how strong confirmation this gives to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: this is the only thrice-uttered perfection. Neither this nor any other perfection is reserved from the second and third Persons: holiness, however, is in a peculiar and pre-eminent sense ascribed to them in common. The Son addresses the *Holy Father*; He is Himself as Incarnate the *Holy Child*; while the Spirit of God is the *Holy Ghost* pre-eminently.

Rev. iv. 8

John xvii.

11.

Acts iv.

30.

John xiv.

26.

Strictly
Related
to the
Creature.

2. All this implies that this attribute is always, directly or indirectly, related to the creature; and, as such, is the standard of goodness and the expression of the Divine abhorrence of evil. It cannot be denied that it severs God from the creaturely nature, apart from its evil. But even in that case there is silent reference to the pollution of sin which has entered the universe, of which all the worshippers, whether of heaven or earth, are conscious. In the direct reference of the attribute to mankind, however, there can be no question that the holiness of God is displayed always on the dark background of sin. It is the law and obligation of all ethical good; it is the eternal repulsion of all ethical evil.

(1.) It is the nature of God that declares what is morally good; that is the only Nature of Things which we dare think of. After all that has been said as to the foundation of goodness and the reason why good is good, we are shut up to one only view. God alone is holy: not because He submits to a law binding on Him and on all; but because holiness has its eternal standard and sanction in Him. It is of no moment to ask whether the Divine nature or the Divine will is the ground of moral obligation. *Be ye holy; for I am holy!* is the only answer. As every intelligent moral agent is created in the image of God, the Divine nature is the only ground of his obligation to be holy: he knows of nothing behind the nature of his God. As he is a subject of the moral government of the Supreme, the Divine will is the ground of his obligation to be holy: he knows nothing behind the will of his God. But these two aspects are really one.

Standard
of all
Holiness

1 Peter i.

16.

(2.) Hence, as the Divine holiness is the standard of goodness, it is the eternal opposite and the eternal condemnation of sin.

Condem-
nation of
all Sin.

- Hab. i. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.* This attribute cannot be separated from the idea of its inviolableness and assertion of its own rights. *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* The conscience, which in the guilty is faithful in its response to the Divine holiness, cries in every sinner: *Woe is me, for I am undone!* The whole tenor of Scripture—not less the New Testament than the Old—is faithful to the conception of this attribute, which makes it not merely retire before unholiness, but also turn against it with abiding displeasure. It not only admits no fellowship with evil, but is eternally repelling, rejecting, and condemning it. *Our God is a consuming fire.* As the thought of the sin from which it is forever defended is always latent in the ascription of holiness to God, so also is the thought of His abiding wrath against it.
- 2 Sam. vi. 20. *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?*
- Isa. vi. 5. *Woe is me, for I am undone!*
- Heb. xii. 29. *Our God is a consuming fire.*
- Holiness Communicative.
3. We should not, however, do justice to this attribute were we not to point out that it is revealed towards men only through an economy of grace which renders it possible that sinners, trembling before the Holy God, may become *partakers of His holiness.* Throughout the entire Scripture there runs one perpetual strain: *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* The ancient people heard it in this form: *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep My statutes and do them: I am the Lord Which sanctify you.* And it was promised to them: *Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.* The awful holiness of Jehovah was revealed, and for ever kept prominent by every token and symbol; and yet a sinful people might be sanctified from the world and from sin to a peculiar fellowship with the Holy One. The God whose glory filled the Temple, and revealed only the unholiness of all who approached Him, nevertheless bade the unholy draw near to be sanctified. Was it then by the rays of His holiness shining upon and around them? Most assuredly not. The mystery of this paradox, that the attribute which separated God from sinners is nevertheless the bond of union between sinners and Himself, is solved only by the system of sacrificial expiation typifying the great Atonement, which through a satisfaction offered to the Divine righteousness opened the fellowship of love between God and man. But this leads to the next attribute, or another exhibition of holiness.
- Heb. xii. 10. *Be ye holy, for I am holy.*
- 1 Peter i. 16. *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep My statutes and do them: I am the Lord Which sanctify you.*
- Lev. xx. 7, 8. *Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.*
- Ex. xix. 6. *Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.*