

The Meaning of Holiness

The scriptures always tell us that we must be holy. (Lev. 20:7, Matt, 5:48, D&C 20:69) We speak of the Holy Priesthood, holy temples, holiness to the Lord. In another article I am going to introduce a concept which I borrowed from *A Course in Miracles* known as the "Holy Relationship". But what does it really mean to be holy?

Since these are biblical words, I first turned to the Bible for a definition. I have an expository dictionary of all the words in the New Testament traced back to the original Greek. The word "holiness" was translated from the original Greek word "hagiasmos". The word is sometimes translated in the New Testament as "sanctified". The basic meaning of the word signifies a separation from the world and a dedication to God, so much so that the word implies, in fact, even God-like. The Anglo-Saxon word from which the word "holy" is derived means "sound", "whole", or "happy". This definition is in line with the Course in Miracles teaching that anything which is whole has the characteristic of holiness.

If we are to be like God, we too must be holy. We must be dedicated to the Will of God and we must be sound and whole. However, we are composite beings. There is our real self which is complete and whole and at one with God. Then there is the body, which serves as our manifestation in the material world. Then there is the mind which believes that the body is our real self and knows nothing of our spiritual or godlike nature.

In this state we are not holy. True, part of us is holy because it has always been with God and never left. But the rest of our being is not in communication with this part and is not necessarily serving the Will of God, and hence is not holy. However, we can apply the principles of the Gospel by drawing nearer to God with our minds and giving our bodies over to the purposes of the Holy Spirit, and thus we can achieve true one-ness or holiness.

In our natural state we do not know our true nature, and we will be unable to know it until it is revealed to us by the Holy Ghost. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to partake of the nature of God and by so doing activate that same nature within us, that we, too, might become holy.

Natural men and women are in a fallen state and as such we are at war with ourselves. It seems to me that when Paul wasn't boasting he was whining. However, in the following passage he does give us some valuable insights into our nature and a situation what we have all run into:

"...but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ...Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ... For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ... But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7: 14-24)

In other words Paul was saying he was "double-minded" (as James puts it). He knew what he was supposed to do, but couldn't make himself do it. He knew what he wasn't supposed to do, but he couldn't stop himself from doing it. This is a state of unholiness. Holiness is to know what is right and do it, and to know what is wrong and not do it. But it

is more than this. Holiness is doing the right thing for the right reason. If we do a kindness for someone it is because we love them and not because we expect some favor or reward in return. If we say we have a testimony of the Gospel, then our actions, thoughts, words, emotions, and our spiritual life should all reflect the same testimony and work together in harmony.

With this understanding of the doctrine of holiness being the unity or alignment of purpose of body, mind, and spirit, and that unified purpose being total dedication to the work and will of God, we can then go back and take a look at traditional Christianity and see it in a totally different light.

The one sin which Jesus totally condemned was the sin of hypocrisy. The literal meaning of a hypocrite in the Greek was "play actor". You know -- the man who sits on the front row in Church and prays and acts really pious, then goes home and beats up his wife and cheats on his taxes. Interestingly enough, hypocrisy is the one thing about traditional Christianity today that turns the general public off and which causes many people to forsake the religion of their youth.

So why is hypocrisy so bad? It is just holiness turned inside out. A person's speech, and beliefs and actions are all working at cross purposes. In other words, they are not whole.

Another word I would like to introduce at this point is "integrity". This is just Sunday "holiness" dressed up in his Monday workaday clothes. Integrity is applied holiness.

In the Old Testament, Moses tells the people to "be holy, for the Lord our God is holy". Christ says the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect [whole, complete] even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." The word "perfect" comes from the Greek word "telios" meaning "having reached its end" or "complete". The Restored Gospel teaches us that God's work and glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. What is eternal life? It is living the kind of life that God leads. Then, if God is holy and we are to become like God, then God's work and glory is to make us holy like Himself.

It is interesting to note that the *Course in Miracles* teaches that the only purpose of God is to have us complete. We see God is not working at cross purposes with Himself. He has one goal and all His energy is dedicated to fulfilling it.

If we are to be holy as God is holy, we should share this goal and share His dedication. Actually, God does not expect us to share an equal portion of His dedication. All He asks is a "little willingness" and He will take the final step Himself.

We are also told in the New Testament that the highest commandment is to love God with "all our heart, might, mind, and strength". Here is another reference to holiness and integrity. All our faculties are aligned and dedicated to one goal. We must have an "eye single" to the glory of God. And God is glorified as we bring ourselves to Him and enable others to do likewise.

This whole idea also has to do with purity. When we speak of "pure gold" or "pure drinking water", we mean a substance is composed of one ingredient. We call anything else an "impurity." "Purity" as applied to humans has the same meaning. We speak of "pure motives", and being "pure in heart". Purity does not mean strict and total abstinence from

a list of "don't's" in some contrived moral code. "Purity" means unity of purpose. It means total dedication to one's goal. Purity is doing whatever you are doing with full purpose of heart. No inward struggles, no moral dilemmas, no temptations, no strivings -- every faculty is working together and as one with a single goal in mind: returning to God. This is holiness.

For centuries, it was a crime for the average person to even possess a Bible, let alone read it. Religion replaced spirituality as the theological spin doctors not only told people what the Bible said, but what to think about it. The Bible talks a lot about holiness and purity as the way to God, but if we have incorrect ideas about what these words mean, then the Bible is useless as a tool to find God. Christ had to deal with the scribes and doctors of religion in His day. He called them "hypocrites". He accused them of blocking the entrance to the Kingdom for others while refusing to enter the Kingdom themselves.

Many adherents claim that *A Course in Miracles* corrects the Bible. Latter-day Saints believe in scriptures which supplement the Bible, but in this light if the previous discussion, we don't have to rewrite the Bible, just reread it.

We apply holiness or integrity in our personal lives when we are true to ourselves, to our beliefs, and experiences. The Course asks us to lay aside our old experiences that we might have new experiences, to choose again and see the world and our brother in a different light.

If we are true to ourselves, we will recognize that familiar Voice inside. If we are true to ourselves, we will hasten to recognize that Voice in our brother. If we are true to ourselves, we will listen to the admonition to "choose again", and won't be threatened by trying something new.

Then, if we are true to ourselves we will recognize that the new experiences are better than the old ones. We will acknowledge that we have grown and overcome problems and come closer to God as a result.

We have learned truth through trial and observation. What is true for us is what we have observed ourselves, and when we lose that we have lost everything. What we know is what we know.

What is personal integrity? Personal integrity is knowing what we know - and having the courage to know and say what we have observed. And that is integrity. And there is no other integrity. Nothing is true for us unless we have observed it, and it is true according to our observation. That is all.

However, if one is pure, one cannot be double-minded. James says that "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways". Do you know people who can't seem to settle down: they keep moving, they keep changing jobs, they can't find a stable relationship, and they carry on a love-hate relationship with their families and with the Church? Perhaps it is because in some areas of their life they are double-minded, or they have divided loyalties. They want to "have their cake and eat it two". Perhaps they are trying to "serve God and mammon". Perhaps they are "living a lie". I give up. I've run out of cliches. I think everybody gets the point by now. Or do we?

The point is this: God doesn't demand perfect performance out of us. All He is asking for is purity of heart and single-mindedness. And He doesn't expect perfection even there. He has provided all kinds of help for us. To see what He really asks of us, let's take the famous promise in Moroni 10:4-5:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."

This is the formula. The key to the knowledge of the truth of all things. What does God ask of us: "a pure heart and real intent". He is not asking for perfect attendance at Sacrament Meeting. He is not requiring that we belong to any church. He is not even asking for "moral purity". He is asking for something much more difficult: **all** of our heart and **all** of our intent. Moral purity is easy by comparison. We can fake that. All we have to do is get a guilty conscience for last Saturday night, feel sorry, exercise enough will power to quit doing whatever if was we did last Saturday night for a couple of weeks, go to the Lord in prayer, ask Him to change us, and wonder why nothing happens.

To see how He is going to help us, let's read further in Moroni 10:32-33:

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God."

"And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot."

That's what the atonement was for! So God could indeed reach down to us, take us where we are, and bring us up to a state of holiness. Will this change us? Yes, we will become "holy without spot". We will be changed in our natures and like King Benjamin's people have no more "disposition to do evil, but to do good continually". Do you know people who pay extra tithing and take on extra duties in the Church thinking this will prove their righteousness or give them a testimony of the Church? My bishop at BYU once wisely said that once people really know who the Lord is, there is nothing they wouldn't do to serve Him, and all the good works of service will follow. To live any other way is simply putting the cart before the horse.