

Response

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Ethical holiness is a very critical aspect of the doctrine of holiness and or sanctification. This doctrine may be so logically and theologically articulated but the practical representation of the sanctified greatly affects the understanding of the spectator that may poorly or dimly portray the image of God.

There are three salient points of the paper, viz. humility as requisite to ontological growth; truth as “realized in self-transcendence,” and “Logotheandric witness” or may be said as real life witness. I consider these as fundamental requisites to growth in holiness and in creating a community of fidelity. Humility makes one open or “disponibilite” to an interpersonal relationship while veracity makes one credible hence fidelity becomes mutual among the participants. A “Logotheandric witness” can enhance the reflection of the imago Dei in man.

The generation or emergence of a community with mutual fidelity or as cited in the paper as “an intersubjective movement of presence” is the ideal of holiness as a doctrine and real life experience. This is what is supposed to be what is happening and what the church is doing in the society. But somehow the church or Christians slanted differently. One extreme option in living a holy life has been asceticism and monasticism. We cannot negate however that within such milieu or context that “an intersubjective movement of presence in creative fidelity,” emerged. Nonetheless the larger society that needs a logotheandric witness is neglected.

There seemed to be two contrasting biblical principles that challenge ethical holiness as an interpersonal movement and “logotheandric witness.” In 2 Cor. 6:14-18, Paul was urging the Corinthian believers “not to be bound together with unbelievers...” (14), and to “come out from their midst and be separate...” (17). While James on the other hand said, “Pure and undefiled religion” is “to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world,” (Jas. 1:27 NASB). Both passages have their own context anyway that can give the reasons for such admonitions. But even Jesus himself did not pray to the Father that the church/believers be taken out of the world, but that they should be protected from the evil one as they are in the world (Jn. 17:15).

Holiness as a personal experience should be reflected ethically. Growth in this experience should be nurtured by the day to day life not in seclusion but within the community including the market place.

Ethical holiness engages the society. Schleiermacher in describing the church as “the fellowship of believers,” posited, “But the truth is that the new life of each individual springs from that of the community, while the life of the community springs from no other individual life

than that of the Redeemer. We must therefore hold that the totality of those who live in the state of sanctification is the inner fellowship; the totality of those on whom preparatory grace is at work is the outer fellowship, from which by regeneration members pass to the inner, and then keep helping to extend the wider circle.” He added “And just as sanctification is the progressive domination of the various functions, coming with time to consist less and less of fragmentary details and more and more to be a whole, with all its parts integrally connected and lending mutual support, so too the fellowship organizes itself... and becomes more and more co-operative and interactive,” (Hodgson & King, 1985:248,250).

So it is not amazing why Jesus charge the disciples which includes us all believers to be “salt of the earth” and light of the world,” (Matt. 5:13-16). As the salt effects some kind of change to the object it contacts with the Christian who is an advocate of holiness by experience and bearer of the image of God should generate change in the community.

Paul has given several guidelines or principles in practicing holiness ethically. Eph. 4:17-32 – deals with both speech and disposition in the community of believers or “creative fidelity.” Wiersbe commented, “It has been said that truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy,” (BEC, vol. 2: Ephesians – Revelation, 38). Col. 2:12-18 – by becoming “blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation,” we can shine like stars. Col. 4:6 – gives us one practical principle to foster a “creative fidelity.”

Ethical holiness is one practical reflection of the image of God in us. Dunning (1988, 493), gives “some implications” of the image of God as “it is renewed by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” (1). “The essence of holiness in personal relations is sincerity.” (Phil. 1:10). (2). “The uninhibited activity of the Holy Spirit within a body of Christian believers is conditioned upon the presence of openness to each other.” (3). “Love in relation to neighbor outside the community entails service and seeking his well-being.” Paul said “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being,” (1 Cor. 10:24 NJKV). Dunning (1988:494) explains that “love finds neighbor in every man regardless of his status or other distinguishing characteristics.”

This concept of ethical holiness: an intersubjective movement of presence in creative fidelity was encapsulated in the poem which St. Francis of Assisi wrote from the summer of 1225 until his death in October 3, 1226, the Canticle of the Creatures or the Canticle of Brother Sun. (Walker, 1959: 236).

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

—St. Francis of Assisi).

Bibliography

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