

At this point arises a still greater difficulty. The very idea of creation at a certain time becomes untenable in view of our knowledge of the natural process; the universe itself, it seems to us, extends over an infinity of space and time. Indeed, the modern view of evolution in place of creation has the grave danger of leading to pantheism, to a conception of the cosmos which sees in God only an eternal energy (or substance) devoid of free volition and self-conscious action.¹ We can evade the difficulty only by assuming God's transcendence, and this can be done in such a way as not to exclude His immanence, or — what is the same thing — His omnipresence.

8. Both God's omnipresence and His eternity are intended only to raise Him far above the world, out of the confines of space and time, to represent His sublime loftiness as the "Rock of Ages," as holding worlds without number in "His eternal arms." "Nothing can be hidden from Him who has reared the entire universe and is familiar with every part of it, however remote."²

¹ See Chapter XXV below.

² Tanh. Naso ed. Buber, 8; Gen. R. IX, 9 with reference to Jer. XXIII, 24.

CHAPTER XVI

GOD'S HOLINESS

1. Judaism recognizes two distinct types of divine attributes. Those which we have so far considered belong to the metaphysical group, which chiefly engage the attention of the philosopher. They represent God as a transcendental Being who is ever beyond our comprehension, because our finite intellect can never grasp the infinite Spirit. They are not descriptions, but rather inferences from the works of the Master of the world to the Master himself. But there are other divine attributes which we derive from our own moral nature, and which invest our whole life with a higher moral character. Instead of arising from the external necessity which governs nature in its causes and effects, these rest upon our assumption of inner freedom, setting the aims for all that we achieve. This moral nature is realized to some extent even by the savage, when he trembles before his deity in pangs of conscience, or endeavors to propitiate him by sacrifices. Still, Judaism alone fully realized the moral nature of the Deity; this was done by investing the term "holiness" with the idea of moral perfection, so that God became the ideal and pattern of the loftiest morality. "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."¹ — This is the central and culminating idea of the Jewish law.²

2. Holiness is the essence of all moral perfection; it is purity unsullied by any breath of evil. True holiness can be

¹ Lev. XIX, 1.

² Comp. Dillmann, l. c., 252 f.; Strauss, l. c., 593 f.; Rauwenhoff, l. c., 498-505; Lazarus: *Ethics of Judaism*, Chapters IV-V.

ascribed only to Divinity, above the realm of the flesh and the senses. "There is none holy but the Lord, for there is none beside Thee," says Scripture.¹ Whether man stands on a lower or higher level of culture, he has in all his plans and aspirations some ideal of perfection to which he may never attain, but which serves as the standard for his actions. The best of his doings falls short of what he ought to do; in his highest efforts he realizes the potentiality of better things. This ideal of moral perfection works as the motive power of the will in setting for it a standard; it establishes human freedom in place of nature's compulsion, but such an ideal can emanate only from the moral power ruling life, which we designate as the divine Holiness.

3. Scripture says of God that He "walketh in holiness,"² and accordingly morality in man is spoken of as "walking in the ways of God."³ "Walk before Me and be perfect!" says God to Abraham.⁴ Moses approached God with two petitions, — the one, "Show me Thy ways that I may know Thee!" the other, "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory!" In response to the latter God said, "No man can see Me and live", but the former petition was granted in that the Lord revealed Himself in His moral attributes.⁵ These alone can be understood and emulated by man; in regard to the so-called metaphysical attributes God will ever remain beyond human comprehension and emulation.

4. In order to serve as vehicle for the expression of the highest moral perfection, the Biblical term for holiness, *Kadosh*, had to undergo a long process of development, obscuring its original meaning. The history of this term gives us the deepest insight into the working of the Jewish genius towards the full revelation of the God of holiness. At first the word

¹ I Sam. II, 21.

² Ps. LXXVII, 14.

³ Deut. X, 12; XI, 22, and elsewhere.

⁴ Gen. XVIII, 19.

⁵ Ex. XXXIII, 13-23.

*Kadosh*¹ seems to have denoted unapproachableness in the sense in which fire is unapproachable, that is, threatening and consuming. This fiery nature was ascribed by primitive man to all divine beings. Hence the angels are termed "the holy ones" in Scripture.² According to both priestly practice and popular belief, the man who approached one of these holy ones with hand or foot, or even with his gaze, was doomed to die.³ Out of such crude conceptions evolved the idea of God's majesty as unapproachable in the sense of the sublime, banishing everything profane from its presence, and visiting with punishment every violation of its sanctity. The old conception of the fiery appearance of the Deity served especially as a figurative expression of the moral power of God, which manifests itself as a "consuming fire,"⁴ exterminating evil, and making man long for the good and the true, for righteousness and love.

5. The divine attribute of holiness has accordingly a double meaning. On the one hand, it indicates spiritual loftiness transcending everything sensual, which works as a purging power of indignation at evil, rebuking injustice, impurity and falsehood, and punishing transgression until it is removed from the sight of God. On the other hand, it denotes the condescending mercy of God, which, having purged the soul of wrong, wins it for the right, and which endows man with the power of perfecting himself, and thus leads him to the gradual building up of the kingdom of goodness and purity on earth. This ethical conception of holiness, which emanates from the moral nature of God, revealed to the prophetic genius of Israel, must not be confused with the old Semitic conception of priestly or

¹ See J. E., art. Holiness. The Assyrian *Kuddisu* denotes "bright," "pure," according to Zimmern in *Religion und Sprache*, K. A. T., 3d ed., 603.

² Deut. XXXIII, 3; Job V, 1; VI, 10; XV, 15; Ps. LXXXIX, 6, 8.

³ Ex. XIX, 21 f.; XXIV, 17; I Sam. VI, 20; Josh. XXIV, 19; Isa. IV, 3; VI, 3, 13; X, 17; XXXI, 9; XXXIII, 14; Hab. I, 13.

⁴ Deut. IV, 24; Ex. XXIV, 17.

ritual holiness. Ritual holiness is purely external, and is transferable to persons and things, to times and places, according to their relation to the Deity. Hence the various cults applied the term "holy" to the most abominable forms of idolatry and impure worship.¹ The Mosaic law condemned all these as violations of the holiness of Israel's God, but could not help sanctioning many ordinances and rites of priestly holiness which originated in ancient Semitic usages. Hence the two conceptions of holiness, the priestly or external and the prophetic or ethical, became interwoven in the Mosaic code to such an extent as to impair the standard of ethical holiness stressed by the prophets, the unique and lofty possession of Judaism. Hence the letter of the Law caused a deplorable confusion of ideas, which was utilized by the detractors of Judaism. The liberal movement of modern Judaism, in pointing to the prophetic ideals as the true basis of the Jewish faith, is at the same time dispelling this ancient confusion of the two conceptions of holiness.

6. The Levitical holiness adheres outwardly to persons and things and consists in their separation or their reservation from common use. In striking contrast to this, the holiness which Judaism attributes to God denotes the highest ethical purity, unattainable to flesh and blood, but designed for our emulation.

The contemplation of the divine holiness is to inspire man with fear of sin and to exert a healthful influence upon his conduct. Thus God became the hallowing power in Judaism and its institutions, truly the "Holy One of Israel" according to the term of Isaiah and his great exilic successor, the so-called Deutero-Isaiah.² Thus His holiness invested His people with

¹ Comp. the name *Kadesh* and *Kedsha* for the hierodules consecrated to Astarte. See Deut. XXIII, 18; I Kings XIV, 24; XV, 12; Hosea IV, 14. Comp. Zimmern, l. c., p. 423.

² Isa. I, 4; V, 12; X, 20; XII, 6; XLI, 14; XLIII, 3 f.; XLV, 11; and elsewhere.

special sanctity and imposed upon it special obligations. In the words of Ezekiel, God became the "Sanctifier of Israel."¹

The rabbis penetrated deeply into the spirit of Scripture, at the same time that they adhered strictly to its letter. While they clung tenaciously to the ritual holiness of the priestly codes, they recognized the ideal of holiness which is so sharply opposed in every act and thought to the demoralizing cults of heathenism.²

7. Accordingly, holiness is not the metaphysical concept which Jehuda ha Levi considers it,³ but the principle and source of all ethics, the spirit of absolute morality, lending purpose and value to the whole of life. As long as men do good or shun evil through fear of punishment or hope for reward, whether in this life or the hereafter, so long will ideal morality remain unattained, and man cannot claim to stand upon the ground of divine holiness. The holy God must penetrate and control all of life — such is the essence of Judaism. The true aim of human existence is not salvation of the soul, — a desire which is never quite free from selfishness, — but holiness emulating God, striving to do good for the sake of the good without regard to recompense, and to shun evil because it is evil, aside from all consequences.⁴

8. The fact is that holiness is a religious term, based upon divine revelation, not a philosophical one resting upon speculative reasoning. It is a postulate of our moral nature that all life is governed by a holy Will to which we must submit willingly, and which makes for the good. How volition and compulsion are with God one and the same, how the good exists in God without the bad, or holiness and moral purpose without unholy or immoral elements, how God can be exactly opposite to all we know of man, — this is a question which

¹ Ezek. XX, 12; XXXVII, 28; Ex. XXXI, 13, and elsewhere.

² See Sifra and Rabba to Lev. XIX, 2.

³ *Cuzari* IV, 3; Kaufmann, l. c., 162 f.

⁴ Aboth, I, 3.

philosophy is unable to answer. In fact, holiness is best defined negatively, as the "negation of all that man from his own experience knows to be unholy." These words of the Danish philosopher Rauwenhoff are made still clearer by the following observations: "The strength in the idea of holiness lies exactly in its negative character. There is no comparison of higher or lesser degree possible between man's imperfections and God's perfect goodness. Instead, there is an absolute contrast between mankind which, even in its noblest types, must wrestle with the power of evil, and God, in whom nothing can be imagined which would even suggest the possibility of any moral shortcoming or imperfection."¹ As the prophet says, "Thou art too pure of eyes to look complacently upon evil,"² and according to the Psalmist, "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."³

9. The idea of holiness became the preëminent feature of Judaism, so that the favorite name for God in Rabbinical literature was "the Holy One, blessed be He," and the acme of all ceremonial and moral laws alike was found in "the Hallowing of His name."⁴ If the rabbis as followers of the Priestly Code were compelled to lay great stress upon ritual holiness, they yet beheld in it the means of moral purification. They never lost sight of the prophetic principle that moral purity is the object of all human life, for "the holy God is sanctified through righteousness."⁵

¹ Rauwenhoff, l. c., 504.

² Hab. I, 13.

³ Psalm XXIV, 4-5.

⁴ L. Lazarus: *Z. Charakteristik d. juedisch. Ethik*, 40-45; M. Lazarus: *Ethics of Judaism*, p. 184.

⁵ Isa. V, 16.

CHAPTER XVII

GOD'S WRATH AND PUNISHMENT

1. Scripture speaks frequently of the anger and zeal of God and of His avenging sword and judgment, so as to give the impression that "the Old Testament God is a God of wrath and vengeance." As a matter of fact, these attributes are merely emanations of His holiness, the guide and incentive to moral action in man. The burning fire of the divine holiness aims to awaken the dormant seeds of morality in the human soul and to ripen them into full growth. Whenever we to-day would speak of pangs of conscience, of bitter remorse, Scripture uses figurative language and describes how God's wrath is kindled against the wrongdoing of the people, and how fire blazes forth from His nostrils to consume them in His anger. The nearer man stands to nature, the more tempestuous are the outbursts of his passion, and the more violent is the reaction of his repentance. Yet this very reaction impresses him as though wrought from outside or above by the offended Deity. Thus the divine wrath becomes a means of moral education, exactly as the parents' indignation at the child's offenses is part of his training in morality.

2. Thus the first manifestation of God's holiness is His indignation at falsehood and violence, His hatred of evil and wrongdoing. The longer men persist in sin, the more does He manifest Himself as "the angry God," as a "consuming fire" which destroys evil with holy zeal.¹ The husbandman cannot

¹ Comp. Dillmann, l. c., 258 f.; J. E., art. "Anger."