



Evangelicalism's identity crisis: The meaning and application of *qōdhes* and *hágios* for Christian holiness and distinctiveness in a post-Christian South Africa

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South African evangelicalism finds itself in the midst of an identity crisis. In many sections of evangelicalism, there seems to be a pervasive worldliness which has resulted in a lack of holiness and distinctiveness amongst many professing Christians. In short, the line between holiness and worldliness has been blurred, compelling evangelicals to recapture the doctrine and praxis of personal holiness. To address the problem of the lack of holiness and distinctiveness amongst evangelicals, this article employed qualitative research in the form of a literature review. It explored the meanings of *qōdhes* and *hágios* and applied them to Leviticus 11:1–47 and 1 John 2:15–17, respectively. Furthermore, these two passages were applied to the contemporary context to see how holiness and distinctiveness may be expressed by evangelicals in the 21st century. The article suggests that holiness and distinctiveness is the proper response to God's holiness and God's graciousness. It also suggests that holiness and distinctiveness demand radical obedience to God's Word, resulting in a radical separation from all forms of worldliness, including desires, attitudes and behaviours.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article explores the meanings of *qōdhes* and *hágios* and their implications for personal ethics. It shows the intradisciplinary relationship between biblical hermeneutics and practical theology and implies an interdisciplinary relationship between philosophy, sociology, anthropology and theology.

Keywords: *qōdhes*; *hágios*; holiness; distinctiveness; sanctification; evangelicalism; radical obedience.

Introduction

The term 'evangelical' is a descriptive word which stems from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, meaning 'gospel' or 'good news'. Balcomb (2016:118) writes that evangelicalism is that facet of Christianity which underscores the gospel of Jesus Christ, heralded as 'an invitation to whoever believes and receives it into a personal encounter with God through Christ that leads to the transformation and renewal of the lives of its recipients'. Moreover, evangelicalism is a complex term, not least because it has various forms and expressions. For example, Bebbington (1988, cited in Forster 2019:2) views evangelicalism as that which involves 'crucicentrism, biblicism, conversionism and activism'. Such a definition of evangelicalism, says Forster (2019:2), allows some scope for 'identifying and considering different forms of evangelicals and evangelical groupings in a variety of theological contexts'. Moreover, this article is concerned with Protestant evangelicalism, which emphasises the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation and the final authority of scripture 'in all matters of doctrine and life' (Rennie 1988:239).

The South African Protestant evangelical church finds itself in the midst of an identity crisis. Many Christians seem to have blurred the line between being *in* the world but not *of* the world. Hence, they often live in ungodliness instead of holiness and distinctiveness. Putman (2008 cited in Brosius 2017:123) bemoans the Christian culture, stating that 'they look far more like the world than they should ... [and] live the same way and chase the same things'. According to Mashua (2011:1), 'cohabitation and premarital sex amongst Christian and non-Christian youth in South Africa ... is becoming more socially acceptable'. Sott (1978:17) writes that 'the church is contradicting its true identity'. Evangelicals seem to be no different to the world.

Thus, evangelicalism is in desperate need of recapturing the meaning of biblical holiness and distinctiveness. This article proposes that a biblical understanding of *qōdhes* and *hágios* impacts directly upon the expression of Christian holiness and distinctiveness in a post-Christian culture.

To this end, it is divided into two main sections, viz. the meaning of *qōdhash* and the meaning of *hágios*.

The meaning of *qōdhash*: Old Testament

The definition of holiness

Qōdhash derives from the verb *qādash* and means ‘apartness, holiness, sacredness’ (ed. Zodhiates 1994:2360). Brown et al. (eds. 1907:871) agree that *qōdhash* means ‘apartness [or] sacredness’. According to Wellman (2014 cited in Harbin 2018:19), *qōdhash* also carries the meaning of “‘otherness, transcendent and totally other’ because God is totally above His creation and His creatures, including us’. Harbin (2018:33) proposes that the word ‘holy’ refers primarily to ‘the absolute moral purity of the members of the Trinity’. The moral purity of the Trinity sets the standard for the holiness of God’s people. Moreover, Gentry (2013:417) argues that the basic meaning of ‘holy’ in both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) is “‘consecrated” or “devoted” rather than moral purity or transcendence. Thus, for example, like the Corinthians, Christians are called ‘saints’ (i.e. holy, devoted ones; see 1 Cor 1:2) based on their position in Christ, but they do not always act in a saintly manner (see 1 Cor 3:1–3) because moral perfection is not possible in this life.

Furthermore, according to Brown et al. (eds. 1907:871–872), *qōdhash* is used in several ways: God’s holy deeds (Ex 15:11); his holy word (Ps 105:42); his holy name (Am 2:7); holy places where God’s presence dwells (Dt 26:15; Jos 5:15; Ex 40:9); holy things at sacred places which have been set apart to God (Ex 30:10; Nm 18:17; Ex 30:25); holy people at sacred places (Lv 21:6; Jr 2:3); holy times of worship (Ex 16:23); and holy people and things, because of their ritual purity (1 Chr 23:13; 1 Sm 21:6). These uses of *qōdhash* indicate that the holiness of anything and anyone is a derived holiness from being in a relationship with God. Implicit in this principle of holiness by association with God is an obligation to demonstrate outward holiness and distinctiveness.

The expression of Israel’s holiness: Leviticus 11:1–47

The Sinai Covenant introduced a general command for Israel’s obedience (Ex 19:5), if they were to enjoy their status and privilege as God’s ‘chosen treasure’ (Ex 19:5). To this end, Israel was to live as a ‘kingdom of priests’ and a ‘holy nation’ (Ex 19:6). The question arises as to what the specific commands were which Israel were called to obey, if they were to live in holiness and distinctiveness. With its focus on ritual purity, Leviticus 11–15 provides a window into how Israel was to express their holiness and distinctiveness in relation to the world. The overarching thesis of Leviticus is the holiness of God’s people. La Sor, Hubbard and Bush (1982:151) agree, stating that ‘the central theme of Leviticus might well be expressed by *qōdeš* “holiness” and *qādōš* “holy”’. Moreover, Tidball (2005:31) notes that holiness denotes being ‘set apart from the ordinary, the mundane, the

fallen and the pagan, and ... set apart to a person or set apart for a purpose’. Thus, the principle of being set apart from the mundane and being set apart to obey God’s will is fundamental for one’s understanding of holiness and distinctiveness. This principle is clearly delineated in Leviticus 11:1–47, which provided Israel with specific commands and motivations for holiness and distinctiveness, viz. negative commands and positive commands.

Negative commands (Lv 11:1–40)

Negatively, Israel was commanded not to eat certain land creatures (Lv 11:1–8), sea creatures (Lv 11:9–12) and flying creatures (Lv 11:13–23). Concerning the prohibition against eating unclean sea creatures, the word ‘detestable’ is used four times in three verses (11:10, 11, 12). Eveson (2007:149) points out that the word *detestable* suggests ‘something that is disgusting and abhorrent (cf. Isa. 66:17)’. In addition, they were commanded not to touch the carcasses of unclean animals (Lv 11:24–40), failing which they would be reckoned as unclean for a period of time, until they had complied with the stipulations for personal cleansing (see e.g. Lv 11:24–25). It is to be noted that the ritual purity laws were not given arbitrarily, but these specific laws (commands) were given to teach Israel the importance of holiness and distinctiveness in relation to the world.

Positive commands (Lv 11:41–45)

At the end of the ritual purity laws regarding clean and unclean food and carcasses (Lv 11:1–43), God provides Israel with ‘twin motivations’ (Tidball 2005:149) for holiness and distinctiveness (Lv 11:44–45). Firstly, Israel was to be holy because of God’s holiness: ‘I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy’ (Lv 11:44, NIV). From a negative perspective, Israel was to pursue holiness and distinctiveness by avoiding being contaminated by unclean food and animal carcasses, and from a positive perspective, Israel was commanded to make a ‘conscious attempt to imitate the holiness of the covenant God’ (Harrison 1980:132). Tidball (2005:149) states that ‘Israel is to imitate God, their maker and covenant redeemer, in the routine of their daily living in the world’. It is in obedience to God’s laws and commands that Israel would begin to see the holiness and distinctiveness which God desires for their lives.

Secondly, Israel was to be holy because of God’s graciousness: ‘I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy’ (Lv 11:45, NIV). Thus, Israel’s holiness and distinctiveness were not just obligations based on the holiness of the God whom they served, but their daily lives were to be epitomised by practical holiness, as an expression of gratitude for their salvation.

Having discussed the command for Israel’s holiness and distinctiveness in the light of Leviticus 11:1–47, the question to ask is: how does one interpret the ritual purity laws to make sense of them today? Tidball (2005:150–153) discusses various approaches to the interpretation of the ritual purity

laws, viz. hygienic, ascetic, allegorical, cultic, symbolic. The evidence suggests that the most reliable approach to interpreting the ritual purity laws is the symbolic approach. Moreover, as Israel applied the ritual purity laws to distinguish between clean and unclean foods at mealtimes, they were constantly reminded of God's holiness and their deliverance from Egypt. Thus, ritual purity laws served as a constant reminder that Israel needed to exhibit a lifestyle of holiness and distinctiveness.

Contemporary application

As seen earlier, *qōdhash* (apartness, holiness, sacredness) is the foundation for understanding holiness and distinctiveness in the OT. Wenham (1979:170) writes that as Israel differentiated between the clean and the unclean, 'they were reminded that holiness was more than a matter of meat and drink but a way of life characterised by purity and integrity'. However, since Christians are not under any obligation to adhere to the ritual purity laws of the OT (cf. Mk 1:1–23; Mt 15:1–20; Ac 10:9–16), what is their significance for Christian living today? Based on these commands on the ritual purity laws (Lv 11:1–47), the following contemporary applications may be made.

Firstly, holiness and distinctiveness are the Christian's responses to God's saving grace (Ex 19:4–6; Lv 11:45; cf. 1 Pt 1:1–16). Just as Israel was to respond to God's saving grace through personal holiness and distinctiveness, so Christians are obligated to do the same. Christians are also 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession' (1 Pt 2:9; cf. Ex 19:5–6) and are therefore obligated to pursue holiness and distinctiveness. Moreover, election to salvation cannot be separated from holiness and blamelessness (Eph 1:4). As Hubbard (2020:n.n.) observes, 'before we ever began to pursue holiness, holiness pursued us, found us, claimed us, filled us'. Consequently, one cannot claim to be a Christian and yet willingly and deliberately continue to live in sin. 1 John 3:9 says that 'no one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God' (cf. 1 Jn 3:6, 10; Rm 6:15). Wenham (1979:184) notes that 'ancient food laws were designed to curb such forgetfulness'. The ritual purity food laws were a constant, visible reminder to Israel of God's saving grace. Hence, striving for holiness and distinctiveness is the Christian's grateful response to God's saving grace in a world where moral perfection is unattainable.

Secondly, holiness and distinctiveness are the Christian's responses to God's holiness (Lv 11:44, 45; cf. 1 Pt 1:15–16). The ritual purity food laws also reminded Israel of Yahweh's moral perfection, and that he therefore desires 'moral perfection in His people' (Wenham 1979:184). Furthermore, Leviticus is concerned with the perfection of both the animal being offered and the worshipper. Thus, the ritual purity food laws served as a constant reminder that the Israelite worshipper needed to make every effort to remain clean in order to approach the temple (cf. Ec 5:1). In the same way,

Christians are to discipline themselves to strive for holiness, though their lives may be at times be punctuated by imperfection.

Thirdly, holiness and distinctiveness are the Christian's responses to living differently to the world (cf. Rm 12:1–2; Phlp 2:15; Col 3:1–25; 1 Pt 1:15–16; 1 Jn 2:15–17). Holiness ought to pervade every facet of the believer's life, in the same way it pervaded the lives of the Israelites. Wheaton (2018:69) writes that Israel's holiness laws 'touched every area of life ... [including] worship, sexuality, farm practices, dietary laws and much more'. Tidball (2005:154) adds that 'holiness is not mere abstract, ethereal quality, removed from the business of everyday life' but 'holiness has to do with concrete realities'.

Thus, as Christ's ambassadors to this world (2 Cor 5:20), it is incumbent on Christians to demonstrate holy living both publicly and privately. The Christian's moral excellence is especially needed in the area of sexual ethics, because it is perhaps the greatest test for many believers. Moreover, holiness and distinctiveness take on different forms 'from generation to generation and from culture to culture' (Tidball 2005:155). For example, clothing fashions for women which are sexually provocative rather than modest (cf. 1 Ti 2:9–10) become symbolic of the choice between clean and unclean. In addition, the more Christians dabble in ungodly behaviour like drunkenness, the more these habits eat away at their holiness and distinctiveness. Such a dichotomy between faith and praxis will almost always lead to a 'decline in ethical behaviour amongst Christians' (Sherman & Hendricks 1987 cited in Cho 2019:n.n.). As Tidball (2005:156) says, 'Christians will always be non-conformists in a world that marginalises the living God'.

The meaning of *hágios*: New Testament

The definition of holiness

The Septuagint (i.e. Greek translation of OT scriptures) consistently uses ἅγιος (holy) to translate the Hebrew root שָׁדָק. Muilenburg (1962:623) notes that the translators of the Septuagint 'sought to do justice to the OT usage of שָׁדָק and its cognates'. To this end, they 'employed the word ἅγιος, but gave to it a latitude and depth for which the Greeks possessed nothing remotely similar' (Muilenburg 1962:623). Therefore, *hágios* holds the key to understand the meaning of holiness and distinctiveness for the people of God in the NT.

Zodhiates (ed. 1992:70) defines *hágios* as 'holy, set apart, sanctified, consecrated, saint'. Mounce and Mounce (eds. 2008:1001) agree, stating that *hágios* concerns that which is 'separate from common condition and use'. ἅγιος (*hágios*) is the NT equivalent of *qōdhash*, and although it is sometimes used in a cultic sense (Mt 4:5; Ac 6:13; 2 Pt 1:18), it is mostly employed to describe those who are in a saving relationship with God (cf. 1 Co 1:2). Those who are called ἅγιοις (saints) are commanded to be holy as God is holy (1 Pt 1:15; cf. Lv 11:44). Therefore, in the same way as holiness is commanded

in the OT (Ex 19:5–6; Lv 11:44), so it is commanded in the NT (Heb 12:14; 1 Pt 1:15; 2 Pt 2:21), compelling Christians to live in obedience. Moreover, a call to salvation is also a call to live in holiness and distinctiveness (Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; cf. Dt 7:6–7).

The expression of the church's holiness: 1 John 2:15–17

There is a definite shift in focus from ritual or ceremonial purity in the OT to moral or ethical purity in the NT. However, it is to be noted that the shift in focus is primarily indicative of a shift from being under the law in the OT to being under grace in the NT. Thus, the OT made the same moral demands as the NT (e.g. David in 2 Sm 11–12 and Ps 51). To show the moral focus in the NT, and thus to demonstrate the expression of the church's holiness, here the focus is on 1 John 2:15–17:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

John's appeal not to love the world in 1 John 2:15–17 is an appeal for moral holiness, which itself is evidence of genuine salvation. Lloyd-Jones (2002:213) writes that John warns the church of 'something that they must avoid – "Love not the world"'. As Jackman (1988:59) puts it, 'if we are going to love God, we cannot also love the world. The two are mutually exclusive objects of our love'. In 1 John 2:15–17, John's appeal for moral holiness includes a command not to love the world and two reasons why the church should not love the world.

The command not to love the world (1 Jn 2:15)

In order to urge the church towards moral holiness, John gives them a negative command: 'Do not love the world or the things in the world' (2:15a). According to Zodhiates (ed. 1991:869), because the verb 'love' is a negated ('not') present imperative active, it indicates continuous action, 'to stop doing something'. Mounce and Mounce (eds. 2008:1000) note that the Greek word for 'love' in verse 15 is *agapaō*, meaning to 'delight in, to set store upon (e.g. Jn 3:19; Heb 1:9)'. In contrast to the *agapaō* love for the world (2:15a) is the *agapē* love of God (2:15b), indicating 'generosity, kindly concern, devotedness' (eds. Mounce & Mounce 2008:1000).

However, to understand what John means by this negative command, one needs to establish the meaning of the word 'world' (2:15a) in this context. Haas, Jonge and Swellengrebel (1972:56) state that the reader's interpretation 'hinges on the right understanding of the term "the world" and its connotations'. According to Zodhiates (ed. 1992:880–882), the word 'world' (Greek, *kosmos*) is used, *inter alia*, in several ways: universe, heavens or earth (Mt 13:35; Jn 17:5; Ac 17:24); mankind (Jn 3:16); the present order of things or Satan's domain which is opposed to God's kingdom (1 Jn 5:19); an idiomatic expression, for example, to describe the tongue

(Jas 3:6); and with an ethical meaning to describe moral corruption (Eph 2:2; Jas 4:4). Moreover, this article suggests that it is this last meaning of moral corruption which is addressed in 1 John 2:15–17. Marshall (1978:142) agrees, pointing out that 'in the writings of John, "world" signifies more usually mankind organised in rebellion against God'.

The reasons not to love the world (1 Jn 2:16–17)

Love not the world because it is not from God (1 Jn 2:16): John says, 'For all that is in the world ... is not from the Father but is from the world' (2:16). The question arises as to what John means by 'all that is in the world', because he surely cannot mean that which God has created (Gn 1:1ff). As Lloyd-Jones (2002:215) puts it, John does not mean 'the mountains and the valleys and the rivers, the streams and the sun and the moon and the stars'. Also, John is not referring to money or material things. Rather, John's concern is the believer's love for the ways of the world, because it typifies a rebellious attitude towards God. Moreover, as Johnson (1993:53) says, 'just as one must choose which side of the schism one is on, so one must choose to serve and love God or the world (cf. Matt. 6:24)'. Thus, in verse 16, John is essentially describing a sinful attitude towards worldliness, from which issues a lack of holiness and distinctiveness. Such an attitude, according to John, is typified by 'the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions' (2:16).

Furthermore, to make sense of verse 16, one must understand what John means by these three phrases. Their meanings can be outlined as follows:

1. 'Desires of the flesh' – the word 'desires' stems from *epithumia*, which, in this context, refers to an 'irregular and inordinate desire, appetite, lust' (ed. Zodhiates 1992:627; cf. Gl 5:16, 24; Eph 2:3). Haas et al. (1972:58) note that *epithumia* speaks of an unholy desire for that which is 'unlawful'. Lloyd-Jones (2002:216) says that it refers to 'the abuse of something which is naturally and perfectly right and legitimate in and of itself'. For example, a desire for food or drink could easily lead to gluttony (1 Cor 10:7; Phlp 3:19; cf. Pr 23:21). Moreover, in relation to the word 'flesh' (Greek – *sarx*) in 1 John 2:16, Zodhiates (ed. 1992:1280) notes that it means 'the seat of carnal appetites and desires, of sinful passions and affections whether physical or moral'. Accordingly, the 'desires of the flesh' primarily refers to the desire to gratify sexual desires in sexually immoral ways (cf. 1 Cor 6:18; Gl 5:19; Eph 5:3; 1 Th 4:3–5).
2. 'Desires of the eyes' speaks of lust which is birthed through the eyes. Marshall (1978:145) observes that 'the basic thought is of greed and the desire for things aroused by seeing them (cf. Gn 3:6; Gn 39:7; Jos 7:20–21)'.
3. 'Pride in possessions' – 'pride' derives from the word *alazoneia*, which refers to 'arrogance; presumptuous speech ... haughtiness' (eds. Mounce & Mounce 2008:1005). Pride of possessions refers to a person who likes to exalt themselves by bragging about and exaggerating their possessions and accomplishments to manipulate and impress others. Thus, these three

phrases (in verse 16) depict the individual who is ungodly in all their ways. John's point is that such a sinful appetite and attitude is contrary to God's will and thus demonstrates a love for the world rather than a love for God.

Love not the world because it will pass away (1 Jn 2:17):

The second reason why Christians should not love the world (2:15) is because 'the world is passing away along with its desires' (2:17). The phrase 'is passing away' comes from *paragetai*, which speaks of that which is perishing or disappearing in its present form (cf. 1 Cor 7:31). Marshall (1978:146) suggests that John is essentially saying that the person who loves the world and indulges in an ungodly attitude will accordingly pass away 'to share in its destruction (cf. 1 Jn 2:8)'. On the other hand, the person who loves God 'abides forever' (2:17b). The phrase 'abides forever' does not mean that those who do the will of God will physically live forever, but that they will abide with God for eternity (cf. Mt 7:21, 24–27; Jn 10:28–30). According to Mounce and Mounce (eds. 2008:1144), doing God's will means to continuously 'execute, fulfil, keep, observe [and] obey' the commandments of God. Consequently, John teaches that what is characteristic of those who genuinely love God is that they strive to obey his word in character and in conduct. It is such a person who 'abides forever' with God in eternity. Moreover, John points to the foolishness of ungodliness over against the wisdom of godliness.

Contemporary application

Holiness and distinctiveness require a radical separation from every form of worldliness (ungodliness), because loving God and loving the world are mutually exclusive. Johnson (1993:52) states that 'authentic love for God and "worldliness" cannot coexist in the same person at the same time'. Eaton (1996:69) defines 'worldliness' as 'the inclination to be drawn into the ways of the people around us who do not know God'. Jackman (1988:59) asserts that 'if we are going to walk in the light with the God who is perfect in holiness, we cannot sit loosely to sin in our own lives'. Likewise, Cole (2006:n.n.) notes that 'worldliness is, at its core, a matter of the heart. If your heart is captured by the world, you will love the things of the world'.

The Apostle Paul views holiness and distinctiveness as a lifestyle which is not patterned after the world, but rather patterned after God as the believer is being transformed into His likeness (Rm 12:1–2). Many evangelicals often seem quite content (even deliberately choosing) to pattern their lifestyles after the world, arguing from a position of relevance, justifying their actions with Paul's becoming 'all things to all men, that I might by all means save some' (1 Cor 9:22, NKJV). However, that is a misapplication of the text, because Paul would never advocate holiness (Rom 12:1–2) and worldliness (ungodliness) at the same time. On the contrary, he argues that Christians must put off the old self and put on the new self (Col 3:1–17). According to Jesus, Christians cannot serve two masters

(Mt 6:24). Although Jesus says this in the context of serving either God or money (see Mt 6:19–24), the same principle would apply to other forms of ungodliness, for example sexual immorality, greed, slander and so forth (Col 3:1–17).

Thus, rather than using scripture to justify behaviour that would be considered ungodly, Christians should strive to please God in all things rather than their own flesh. Naselli (2018:124) asserts that 'we must fight worldliness because it dulls our affections for Christ and distracts our attention from Christ. Worldliness is so serious because Christ is so glorious'. Christians cannot love God and the world simultaneously because John says that these two things are mutually exclusive.

Holiness and distinctiveness require a radical separation from worldliness in the form of sinful desires, attitudes and behaviours. In other words, Christians must separate themselves from unholy desires (e.g. gluttony), unholy things (e.g. sexually immoral movies, magazines, social media) and unholy attitudes and behaviours such as pride and arrogance which often lead to being 'lovers of self' (2 Ti 3:1–9).

This lack of holiness and distinctiveness can be demonstrated in various ways:

1. The impact of unholy desires, attitudes and behaviours can be seen amongst Christian leaders – Delgado (2019:7) observes that 'as secularism has continued to mount, many Christian leaders have continuously abandoned their duties and engaged in malpractices'. Cincala (2018:19–20) has done research that indicates that the moral failure of most Christian leaders in Africa is because of sexual immorality or financial impropriety. According to Carter (2020:6), one of the primary reasons for the demise of marriages in the church is 'poor leadership, consisting of unqualified pastors, unhealthy church leadership and the "sinful character" of many men'. This behaviour is contrary to the teaching of scripture (see 1 Ti 3:2; Tt 1:6–9).
2. The impact of false doctrine and ungodliness – Delgado (2019:4) notes that, *inter alia*, false doctrine, ungodliness and a lack of reverence for God's word have resulted in 'presumptuous sinning patterns [being] on the rise, where despite knowing the right thing to do, most believers resort to sinning'. Wright (2017:78) argues that the deterioration of the church's sexual ethics is predominantly a result of the fact that it 'has moved away from biblical teachings on such things (cf. Mt 2:1–9)'. Another example of how false doctrine can lead to unholiness and a lack of distinctiveness is seen in how a prosperity gospel may cause followers to become greedy and covetous. This is typified by the charismatic motivational speaker Patricia Shirer (2021, min 35:00–36:55), who has reduced personal holiness to a pattern of behaviour to attract God's favour and blessing.
3. The impact of social media – social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have led to what Salomon

(2017) calls 'The Selfie Generation'. In many cases, this love for taking 'selfies' and constant posting is associated with 'personality traits such as narcissism' (Griffiths & Balakrishnan 2018:3). Social media has also resulted in an increase in sexual immorality. Studies done by Charteris, Gregory and Masters (2018) show that sexting (i.e. exchanging sexually explicit images and videos via texting) has led to a decline in morals and values. The Barna Group have done studies in 2016 indicating that '62% of teens and young adults have received a sexually explicit image and 41% have sent one (usually from/to their boy/girlfriend or friend)' (Kinnaman 2016:n.n.). The same study also shows that 'most pastors (57%) and youth pastors (64%) admit they have struggled with porn, either currently or in the past' (Kinnaman 2016:n.n.). And because ungodliness is not from God, Christians ought to make every effort to live in holiness.

Holiness and distinctiveness require an attitude of obedience to God's word. Over the centuries, different Christian groups have adopted different approaches to avoid worldliness (ungodliness):

1. Ascetic approach – some have advocated a complete withdrawal from the world. For example, Josephus (cited in Marshall 1978:143) writes that the Essenes refrained from sexual intercourse with their wives 'in order to demonstrate that they married not for pleasure but to produce children'. Some evangelical fundamentalists still practice the ascetic approach. But John is not suggesting such a radical withdrawal from the world (cf. Jn 17:14–19).
2. Inadequate approach – others view worldliness as that which is 'taboo'. For example, taboos refer to things a Christian should not do, for example dancing, going to movies, wearing jewellery, etc. However, those with such an approach to holiness and distinctiveness miss the point of 1 John 2:15–17 because 'they define worldliness as they think of it and not as John thinks of it' (Lloyd-Jones 2002:214).
3. Antinomian approach – the antinomian (i.e. lawlessness) approach is the most dangerous of all. One cannot live in disobedience and sin and claim to be a Christian (Rm 6:1ff; 1 Jn 3:9). Jackman (1988:60) writes that such people are often so deeply entrenched in ungodliness, it is 'difficult to see how [they differ] in their lifestyle from the secular society around them'. Jackman (1988:60) goes on to say that 'our contemporary danger is that we tend to water down this radical demand. We think that we can love the world a little bit'.

Thus, the best approach to holiness and distinctiveness is to be found in simple obedience to God's word, by watching one's attitude towards ungodliness. Christians must be decisive and determined to either serve God wholeheartedly or not serve him at all (1 Ki 18:21; Jos 24:15; Mt 6:24; Rv 3:15–16). Mueller (2019:n.n.) states that 'a worldly heart is one that has allowed someone, something, or some desire, or some person to compete for God's rightful place as first love in everything'.

Conclusion

Evangelicalism in South Africa finds itself in a precarious position when it flirts with ungodliness. It must recover the meanings of *qōdhash* and *hágios* and apply them without compromise. Bethancourt (2012:46) writes that the evangelical churches must equip believers to find the answers to their identity 'in the narrative of Scripture rather than the surrounding society'. Anthony (2019:396) states that 'with God as the head of our spiritual family, we find our identity as his children by new birth and adoption'.

The ritual purity laws in Leviticus 11:1–47 demonstrate that holiness and distinctiveness ought to be evident in every aspect of the Christian's life. Holiness and distinctiveness are the proper response to God's holiness and graciousness (Lv 11:44–45; 1 Pt 1:1–16). Moreover, 1 John 2:15–17 demonstrates that holiness and distinctiveness issue from a call not to love the moral corruptness of the world. To live in holiness and distinctiveness requires that Christians keep a careful watch over their desires, attitudes and behaviours, which, if they go unchecked, will lead to unholiness.

Ultimately, as Gentry (2013) argues, holiness means devotedness to Christ. Christians are holy ones who are called to strive for holiness and distinctiveness, although they will not always live in a holy manner.

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