An Old Testament Justification for Separatism
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The theme of this year's Mid-America Conference on Preaching is "Gospel-Driven Separation." In keeping with this year's theme, my workshop focuses on an Old Testament justification for separatism. My thesis in this workshop is that separatism is inextricably linked to the Old Testament concept of holiness.[1] After a brief look at the basis for separation, we will examine the Old Testament words used for holiness with a focus on their connection to separatism.[2]

The Basis for Separatism
Biblical separation is predicated upon the holiness of God. While I do not want to exalt one of God's attributes to the exclusion or subordination of any of his other attributes, God's holiness reflects the excellence of God's moral purity that permeates his essential nature and work.[3] In perfect coordination with all of his other attributes, God's holiness is coextensive with everything that can be attributed to God and, consequently, has far-reaching implications for understanding separatism. As such, a biblically informed understanding of God's holiness and what he has to say about holiness is a prerequisite for comprehending separatism.

The Holiness Word Group
In the Old Testament separatism is related to the complex of words most often associated with the concept of holiness. This complex of words is related to the verb *qadash*, to "be holy, removed from common use."[4] This verb along with its derivative forms is found in the Old Testament 842 times.[5] Though it is beyond the scope of this workshop to do a thorough study of the *qadash* word group,[6] we should note that these words have a range of nuances, such as the separation from evil to good, separation from common to holy use, and the basic nature of holiness. In order to see how this range of uses relates to separatism, we will survey these uses by looking at the holiness verb forms and their derivative cognates.

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[1]My workshop material is an adaptation from my article, "The Old Testament Foundation for Separation," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 7 (Fall 2002): 3–22.

[2]For a fuller treatment of separatism, see Rolland D. McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2004).

[3]Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God,* 2 vols. in 1 (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2:112–13.

[4]Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 2 vols., rev. W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stamm, study ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:1072–73 (hereafter cited as *HALOT*); see also Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (reprint ed., Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 872–73 (hereafter cited as BDB).

[5]My count is based on statistics derived from *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament,* s.v."קדשׁ," by H. -P. Müller, 3:1106–7 (hereafter cited as *TLOT*).

[6]See my "OT Foundation for Separation," pp. 5–11.

Holiness Verb Forms

The various verb forms related to *qadash* demonstrate that this verb's semantic range depict what is holy by nature or the action that removes something from functioning in the ordinary to the holy realm. The verb form *qadash* is used in four of seven Hebrew stems: Qal, Piel, Hiphil and Niphal. The nuance mentioned in the previous paragraph ("to be holy, removed from common use") is a use related to the Qal stem. *Qadash* is used in the Qal 11 times and its nuances focus more precisely on "that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred,"[7] such as objects dedicated to God for Levitical service (Exod 29:21). Generally speaking, when the verb is used in the Piel and Hiphil stems, it presents the activity used to consecrate a person or object from the common sphere to the holy.[8] In Exodus 31:13 Moses uses the Piel to denote God setting apart the Sabbath for his purposes; and in Numbers 8:17 the Hiphil stem describes God setting apart the firstborn of men and animals for his use.[9] When this verb is used in the Niphal stem and God is its subject, the verb may denote God's "self-representation of his holiness in Israel."[10] In Leviticus 10:1–3, God "proves his holiness by judging sin.… His holiness is also demonstrated in his adherence to his promises" (Ezek 20:41; 28:25; 39:27).[11] Consequently, the *qadash* verb forms reflect what is properly holy or the activity that separates a person or an object from the realm of common use to the sacred.

Cognates in the *Qadash* Word Group

The verb *qadash* also has other cognate words such as *miqdash* ("sanctuary"),[12] *qadosh* ("holy")[13] and *qodesh* ("holiness").[14] Each of these three words has nuances related to separation. The first noun *miqdash* is used 74 times in the Old Testament[15] and is most often used as a designation for either the tabernacle or the temple,[16] each one God's appointed place set apart for worship. The second word *qadosh* ("holy"), an adjective, is found 116 times in the Hebrew text;[17] and it "denominates that which is intrinsically sacred or which has been admitted

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[7]*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,* s.v. "קָדַשׁ," by Thomas E. McComiskey, 2:786 (hereafter cited as *TWOT*).

[8]Ibid., 2:786.

[9]BDB, pp. 872–73; see also *HALOT,* 2:1073–74.

[10]*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* s.v. "קדשׁ," by Jackie A. Naudé, 3:884 (hereafter cited as *NIDOTTE*).

[11]*TWOT,* s.v. "קָדַשׁ," 2:787.

[12]*NIDOTTE,* s.v. "קדשׁ," 3:877.

[13]Ibid.

[14]*HALOT,* 2:1076.

[15]From count in *TLOT,* s.v. "קדשׁ," 3:1107.

[16]*TWOT,* s.v. "קָדַשׁ," 2:789.

[17]From count in *TLOT,* s.v. "קדשׁ," 3:1107.

to the sphere of the sacred by divine rite or cultic act."[18] This adjective may be used in connection with people (Deut 14:2), things (Exod 29:31), "the day on which Ezra read the law (Neh 8:9, 10, 11) and the water used to test the woman suspected of adultery (Num 5:17)."[19] When this adjective is used in connection with God, it has great theological significance for it refers to God's absolute separation from all moral defilement.[20] The prophet Isaiah reflects the theological import of this term. The divine title "the Holy One of Israel" is used 32 times in the Old Testament, with 25 uses in the book of Isaiah. The prophet uses this title to contrast the morally defective Israelite community of his day with God's absolute moral perfection (Isa 30:11) and separation from sin (Isa 17:7). Thus, when *qadosh* refers to God's moral holiness, God's inviolable separation from moral impurity affirms that he "is the great Separatist."[21]

The third word *qodesh* ("holiness") is used 469 times in the Old Testament.[22] It focuses on "the essential nature of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred and which is thus distinct from the common or profane."[23] In Leviticus 10:10 and Ezekiel 22:26, the distinction between the common and the sacred is apparent from the antithetical relationship between the "common" (*hol*) and "holy" (*qodesh*). Accordingly, "holiness" (*qodesh*) involved a separation of the holy from the common. An inherent aspect of the Israelite theocracy maintained a sacrosanct distinction between the realm of holiness and the realm of the common.[24] This fundamental distinction was seen in the Sabbath observance. On a more general level, this distinction is apparent in that things set apart to God were considered within the realm of the sacred. They were regarded as "holy." The "holy things" included objects set apart for worship (Lev 5:15–16), the produce from the land (Lev 19:24) and spoil acquired from war (Josh 6:19).[25] Whatever the holy God set apart as *qodesh* was separated from common use and consecrated for his own holy purposes.

The fundamental reason why anything set apart by God entered into the realm of the sacred is that it was an expression of the holy purpose of Israel's God. In contrast to the pagan deities of the ancient Near East whose basic natures were consumed by the same unholy passions as fallen humanity, God's basic nature is one of intrinsic moral purity: God is absolutely separated from all evil and is totally consecrated to his own inherent purity and goodness. When Habakkuk compared the decadent Judean society of his day to God's moral holiness, his response to God was "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong"

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[18]*TWOT,* s.v. "קָדַשׁ," 2:787.

[19]*NIDOTTE,* s.v. "קדשׁ," 3:877.

[20]Though it is not necessary for this paper's thesis to discuss God's transcendent holiness, this aspect of divine holiness is also an important aspect of God's separateness from the created realm. For further discussion of this point, see my "OT Foundation for Separation," pp. 7–11.

[21]Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1979), p. 163.

[22]Statistics taken from *TLOT,* s.v. "קדשׁ," 3:1107.

[23]*TWOT,* s.v. "קָדַשׁ," 2:787.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

(1:13).[26] This text reflects that God is constitutionally separated from any form of evil. It is then no surprise that the noun *qodesh* ("holiness") is used to stress God's absolute separation from any syncretistic connection with ancient Near Eastern religions (see Amos 2:6–16). Consequently, we could summarize our examination of the cognates in the *qadash* word group as indicating that God is intrinsically holy, that anything he sets apart is sacred and that his own holiness requires separation from anything that is contrary to his moral character.

Concluding Observations

We have surveyed the general uses of the verb *qadash* and three other cognate words for holiness with a focus on the nuance of separation. This separation involves the removal of an object or being from common use or evil and consecration to the sphere of holiness. When *qadash* and its cognates are applied to God, we have seen that God's holiness relates to his moral purity. God has been separating out for himself since creation a people to follow, in faith, his pattern of holiness. God's demand to imitate his holiness was clearly commanded in the Old Testament: "You shall be holy [*qadosh*], for I the Lord your God am holy [*qadosh*]" (Lev 19:2; see also Lev 11:44). While a connection between holiness and separatism is apparent from the nuances connection with holiness, a nexus between both concepts is stated in Leviticus 20:26: "You shall be holy [*qadosh*] to me, for I the Lord am holy [*qadosh*] and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine."

Furthermore, God's command for his people to be holy carries over into the New Testament: "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Paul also expresses that we are to be characterized by holiness in 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." And, we strive after holiness by separatism, as Paul maintains in 2 Corinthians 6:17–18: "Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, God requires his people to be holy by separating from whatever he commands. Therefore, there is a biblical warrant for qualifying orthodox Christianity as "separatist."

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[26]All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the 2001 ESV.