

# THE HOLINESS OF GOD BY R C SPROUL

## CHAPTER 1: THE HOLY GRAIL

References ([Black book](#), [White book](#), [Kindle](#))

### **I. R C SPROUL'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S HOLINESS (3, 1, K19)**

#### A. Sproul's experience of the holy presence of God

1. Late at night compulsion to walk to chapel where he fell on his knees at the chancel in silent prayer
2. Wave of overwhelming terror urged him "to run from the foreboding presence that gripped me."
3. Wave of unspeakable peace "that brought instant rest and repose to my troubled spirit."
4. "I wanted to linger there. To say nothing. To do nothing. Simply to bask in the presence of God."

#### B. Life-transforming moment

1. He could never be the same again as this "indelible imprint of power" could never be erased.
2. "I was alone with God. A holy God. An awesome God. A God who could fill me with terror in one second and with peace in the next. I knew in that hour that I had tasted of the Holy Grail. Within me was born a new thirst that could never be fully satisfied in this world."
3. He resolved to learn more and pursue this God

### **II. BACKGROUND (6, 4, K41)**

#### A. Sproul was a new Christian after a sudden and dramatic conversion experience

1. "Filled with zeal for the sweetness of Christ."
2. New passion to study the Bible, learn how to pray, beat indwelling sin, grow in grace, serve Christ.

#### B. Two Missing Things

1. Abundant zeal but shallowness
2. Practical Unitarian with sole focus on Christ (God the Father was an enigma, a stranger, shrouded in mystery).

#### C. Afternoon philosophy class on Augustine changed everything

1. Augustine taught that God created world out of nothing by a verbal command but asked, "How was it done?"
2. Once there was nothing, then suddenly, by the command of God, there was a universe.

3. Augustine called that “the divine imperative” or “the divine fiat.”

#### D. Fiat

1. Dictionary defines a *fiat* as “an act of the will that creates something.”
2. Illustration of the computer working by *fiat* but the power of human fiat is limited to the ones already programmed into the computer.
3. God’s fiats are not so limited: “He can create by the sheer force of His divine command. He can bring something out of nothing, life out of death. He can do these things by the sound of His own voice.”

#### E. God said....

1. “As soon as the words left the Creator’s mouth, things began to happen. Where his voice reverberated, stars appeared, glowing in unspeakable brilliance in temp with the song of angels. The force of divine energy splattered against the sky like a kaleidoscope of color hurled from the palette of a powerful artist. Comets crisscrossed the sky with flashing tails like Fourth of July skyrockets.”
2. “The Supreme architect gazed at His complex blueprint and shouted commands for the boundaries of the world to be set.”
3. “Then God stooped to earth and carefully fashioned a piece of clay. He lifted it gently to His lips and breathed into it. The clay began to move. It began to think. It began to feel. It began to worship. It was alive and stamped with the image of its Creator.”

### III. APOLOGETICS (12, 9, K105)

#### A. Some say that the world was created *by* nothing

1. We say it was created *from* nothing
2. “The modern view is far more miraculous than the biblical view. It suggests that nothing created something. More than that, it holds that nothing created everything – quite a feat indeed!”

#### B. Moderns will protest and say, “Chance created the universe.”

1. “But chance is no thing. It has no weight, no measurements, no power. It is merely a word we use to describe mathematical possibilities. It can do nothing. It can do nothing because it is nothing.”

#### C. Augustine understood that “somewhere, somehow, something or someone had to have the power of being. If not, then nothing would now exist.”

1. “God alone can create beings because He alone has the *power of being*.”
2. “He has the power to be all by Himself...He alone can call worlds into being by fiat, by the power of His command.”
3. What Augustine taught about God creating the world out of nothing by the sheer power of His voice, that drove Sproul to the chapel at midnight.

#### **IV. RESULTS (14, 10, K124)**

##### A. Converted to God the Father

1. Classroom and Chapel experience like being born again a second time
2. Converted not only to God the Son but God the Father
3. “Suddenly I had a passion to know God the Father. I wanted to know Him in His majesty, to know Him in His power, to know Him in His august holiness.”

##### B. Questions and Difficulties from idea of God who created Universe out of nothing

1. How could such a good God create a world that’s in such a mess?
2. How could God order the slaughter of women and children in the Old Testament?
3. How could God kill Uzzah for touching the ark?
4. What about other narratives that revealed a brutal side to the character of God?
5. How could I ever come to love such a God?

#### **V. SOLUTION: THE HOLINESS OF GOD (15, 11, K134)**

##### A. Central idea of Bible: God is holy

1. Kept meeting one concept in Scripture – the holiness of God
2. “I am convinced it is ne of the most important ideas that a Christian can ever grapple with. It is basic to our whole understanding of God and of Christianity.”

##### B. Question to Christians: “What’s the top priority of the church?”

1. Answers: Evangelism, social action, spiritual nurture

##### C. Jesus’ Priority

1. Hallowed be your name (Matt. 6:9).
2. This is not an ascription of praise (“hallowed *is* your name”) but a petition (“hallowed *be* your name”)

3. None of the following petitions can follow without the first.
  - a. “God’s kingdom will never come where His name is not considered holy”
  - b. “His will is not done on earth as it is in heaven if his name is desecrated here.”

**VI. CONCLUSION (16, 12, K145)**

A. “How we understand the person and character of God the Father affects every aspect of our lives.”

1. “If God is creator of the entire universe...He is the Lord of the whole universe.”
2. “No part of my life must be outside of His lordship.”
3. “His holy character has something to say about economics, politics, athletics, romance – everything with which we are involved.”

B. “God is inescapable”

1. “Not only does He penetrate every aspect of our lives, but He penetrates it in His majestic holiness.”
2. “We must seek to understand what the holy is... There can be no worship, no spiritual growth, no true obedience without it.”
3. It defines our goal as Christians. God has declared, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44).
4. “To reach that goal, we must understand what holiness is.”