

teaches: "If we observe the law of vigilance and practise discernment with knowledge, from which the fruit of life is reaped, then the assaults with the assaults of the passions will in nowise draw near our mind.

g. Vainglory and Its Opposite Virtue—Humble-Mindedness

774 Vainglory (also known as vanity) is the passion for earthly and human glory, and all manner of honours. The root of vainglory is found in person's dependence on what others think of him or her. Manifestations of vainglory include intolerance of criticism, a refusal to acknowledge one's mistakes, and a constant desire for praise from others. Vainglory manifests itself in boasting of one's material achievements or intellectual abilities and talents, as well as bringing attention to one's spiritual accomplishments.

775 Attachment to earthly glory makes a person's spiritual growth impossible. This is because it replaces the pursuit of God's glory with a pursuit of human glory. In teaching about the vanity of temporal glory, St John Chrysostom asks:

If you are looking forward to the resurrection and retribution, why go chasing the values of this life to such an extent? ... The cause of all evils, however, is vainglory and the desire to give one's own name to property, baths, houses. What good is it to you, human being that you are, when in no time a fever comes upon you, your soul suddenly takes wings and leaves you alone and naked—or, rather, stripped of virtue but encumbered with injustices, robberies, acts of greed, groanings, lamentations, orphans' tears, plots, intrigues? ... You would therefore have to remain outside, and lumbered with these burdens to repent too late ⁴⁸⁷

776 The virtue of humble-mindedness makes a person capable of perceiving oneself as a creature of its Maker and of living for God rather than for oneself. When one humbly accepts oneself as he or she is in God's eye that person becomes truly wise. The humble-minded person accepts things sent him or her by God and does everything for his glory. "Strive first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). Saint Isaac the Syrian teaches "Humble-mindedness is the raiment of the Godhead. The Word who became human clothed himself in it, and therewith spoke to us in a body. Every person who has been clothed with it has truly been made like unto him who came down from his own exaltedness."⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ ISAAC THE SYRIAN, *The Ascetical Homilies*, 38.

⁴⁸⁷ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Genesis*, 22, 6-7: PG 53,194-195.

⁴⁸⁸ ISAAC THE SYRIAN, *The Ascetical Homilies*, 20.

h. Pride and Its Opposite Virtue—Humility

777 Pride is the most dangerous passion and the mother of all sins. It was because of pride that Satan fell from God, and it is precisely pride that has ruined the prolonged endeavours of many an ascetic. Pride is a person's idolatrous self-deification: a person exalts oneself over other people and puts oneself in the place of God. The proud person is closed to God's grace: "The Lord opposes the proud; but he gives grace to the humble" (Pry 3:34, Lxx; see 1 Pt 5:5 and Jas 4:6). Saint Augustine teaches that pride is the source of all evil, and in order to overcome all other sins, one must rid oneself of the root cause—pride: "Whence does iniquity abound? From pride. Cure pride and there will be no more iniquity. Consequently, that the cause of all diseases might be cured, namely, pride, the Son of God came down and was made low."⁴⁸⁹

778 The proud person usually does not see his or her own sin. This person is filled with self-love, finds it difficult to forgive, and to ask forgiveness of others, and has trouble relenting. Such a person rejects all forms of authority and frequently flares up in anger. He or she bears grudges, constantly judges other people, and envies their successes. Pride deceitfully takes control even of those who, having achieved virtue, regard themselves, rather than God, as the cause of their achievements.

779 The most effective means of combatting pride is to train oneself in humility. This opens a person toward God and neighbour and makes a person capable of receiving God's transfiguring and liberating power. The apostle Paul declares: "We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:4-5). Through the virtue of humility, a person stands in truth before the face of God. Therefore, Christian humility does not demean a person, but allows one to recognize one's true dignity as a child of God. Saint John Chrysostom teaches:

He who places humility as the foundation of his character can safely build a building of any height. It [humility] is the strongest palisade, an immovable wall, an impenetrable fortress; it supports the entire edifice and does not allow it to fall... it makes it inaccessible to all attacks... and through it God, the lover of mankind, pours out on us his plentiful gifts.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 25, 16: PL 35, 1604.

⁴⁹⁰JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Genesis*, 36, 7: PG 53, 330.