

HOLINESS AND HUMILITY

Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

“Stand by thyself...for I am holier than thou.”—Isaiah 65:5

WE HEAR a great deal of seekers after holiness and professors¹ of holiness, of holiness teaching and holiness meetings. The great test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or attain is truth and life will be whether it be manifest in the *increasing humility it produces*. In the creature, humility is the one thing needed to allow God’s holiness to dwell in him and shine through him. In Jesus, the Holy One of God Who makes us holy, a divine humility was the secret of His life, death, and exaltation. The one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God and men that marks us. Humility is the bloom and the beauty of holiness.

The chief mark of counterfeit holiness is its *lack* of humility. Every seeker after holiness needs to be on his guard, lest unconsciously what has begun in the Spirit is perfected in the flesh, and pride creeps in where its presence is least expected.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee,² and the other a publican³” (Luk 18:10). There is no place or position so sacred but the Pharisee can enter there. Pride can lift up its head in the very temple of God, and make His worship the scene of its self-exaltation. Since the time Christ so exposed his pride, the Pharisee has put on the garb of the publican; and the confessor of deep sinfulness—equally with the professor of the highest holiness—must be on the watch. Just when we are most anxious to have our heart [be] the temple of God, we shall find two men coming up to pray. And the publican will find that his danger is not from the Pharisee beside him, who despises him, *but the Pharisee within* who commends and exalts him. In God’s temple (1Co 6:19), when we think we are holiest of all—in the presence of His holiness—let us beware of pride. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan came also among them*” (Job 1:6).

“God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are...or even as this publican” (Luk 18:11). It is in that which is just cause for thanksgiving—it is in the very thanksgiving which we render to God, it [even] may be in the very confession that God has done it all—that *self* finds its cause of complacency.⁴ Yes, even when in the temple, where the language of penitence and trust in God’s mercy alone is heard, the Pharisee may take up the note of praise—and in thanking God, may be congratulating himself. Pride can clothe itself in the garments of praise or of penitence.⁵ Even though the words, “I am not as other men are,” are rejected and condemned, their spirit may too often be found in our feelings and language towards our fellow worshipers and fellow men.

Would you know if this really is so, just listen to the way in which churches and Christians often speak of one another. How little of the meekness and gentleness of Jesus is to be seen. It is so little remembered that deep humility must be the key-note of what the servants of Jesus say of themselves or each other. Is there not many a church or assembly of saints, many a mission or convention, many a society or committee, even many a mission away in heathendom, where the harmony has been disturbed and the work of God hindered because men who are counted saints have proved—in touchiness, haste, and impatience, in self-defense and self-assertion, in sharp judgments and unkind words—that they did not each reckon others better than themselves, and that their holiness has but little in it of the meekness of the saints (Phi 2:3)? In their spiritual history, men may have had times of great humbling and brokenness, but what a different thing this is from being *clothed* with humility, from having an humble spirit, from having that lowliness of mind in which each counts himself the servant of others, and so shows forth the very mind which was also in Jesus Christ (Phi 2:5).

¹ **professors** – those who claim to believe certain teachings.

² **Pharisee** – member of the ancient Jewish sect noted for strict obedience to Jewish traditions.

³ **publican** – tax collector, among the Jews, the most hated position appointed by Rome.

⁴ **complacency** – being pleased with a person or thing; satisfaction.

⁵ **penitence** – repentance; expressing sorrow for one’s sins.

“Stand by...for I am holier than thou!” What a parody on holiness! Jesus the Holy One is the humble One; *the holiest will ever be the humblest*. There is none holy but God; we have as much holiness as we have of God. And according to what we have of God will be our real humility, because humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is All. The holiest will be the humblest. Alas! Though the barefaced, boasting Jew of the days of Isaiah (65:5) is not often to be found (even our manners have taught us not to speak thus), how often his spirit is still seen—whether in the treatment of fellow saints or of the children of the world. In the spirit in which opinions are given, though the garb be that of the publican, the voice is still that of the Pharisee: “O God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men.”

And is there, then, such humility to be found, that men shall indeed still count themselves “less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8), the servants of all? There is! Love “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...seeketh not her own” (1Co 13:4-5). Where the spirit of love is shed abroad in the heart (Rom 5:5)—where the divine nature comes to a full birth, where Christ the meek and lowly Lamb of God is truly formed within—*there* is given the power of a perfect love that forgets itself and finds its blessedness in blessing others, in bearing with them and honoring them, however feeble they be. Where this love enters, there God enters. And where God has entered in His power, and reveals Himself as All, there the creature becomes nothing. And where the creature becomes nothing, he is humble towards his fellow creatures, and the presence of God becomes not a thing of times and seasons, but the covering under which the soul ever dwells. Its deep abasement⁶ before God becomes the holy place of His presence whence all its words and works proceed.

May God teach us that our thoughts, words, and feelings concerning our fellow men are *His test* of our humility towards Him, and that our humility before Him is the only power that can enable us to always be humble with our fellow men. Our humility must be the life of Christ, the Lamb of God, within us.

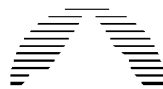
Let all teachers of holiness, whether in the pulpit or on the platform, and all seekers after holiness, whether in the closet or the convention, take warning. There is no pride so dangerous, because none is so subtle and insidious, as *the pride of holiness*. There grows up, all unconsciously, a hidden habit of soul that feels complacency in its attainments, and cannot help seeing how far it is in advance of others. It can be recognized, not always in any special self-assertion or self-laudation,⁷ but simply in the *absence* of that deep self-abasement which cannot but be the mark of the soul that has seen the glory of God (Job 42:5-6; Isa 6:5). It reveals itself, not only in words or thoughts, but in a tone, a way of speaking of others, in which those who have the gift of spiritual discernment cannot but recognize the power of self. Even the world, with its keen eyes, notices it and points to it as proof that the profession of a heavenly life does not bear any special heavenly fruits.

O brethren, let us beware! Unless we make the increase of humility our study, we may find that the only sure mark of the presence of God, the disappearance of self, was all the time wanting.⁸ Come and let us flee to Jesus, and hide ourselves in Him until we be clothed upon with *His* humility. That alone is our holiness.

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⁶ **abasement** – humiliation; lowering; bringing down; reduction in rank, esteem, or estimation.

⁷ **laudation** – act of extolling or honoring; praise.

⁸ **wanting** – lacking.