

Humility:

What is humility?

Humility is focused on serving others and knows deeply that everything is a gift of God. Humility recognizes the need for others and readily shares the credit and praise for anything accomplished. Humility is obedience to God.

Php 2:3 (NKJV) *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Php 2:4 (NKJV) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Php 2:5 (NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Php 2:6 (NKJV) who, **being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,**

Php 2:7 (NKJV) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

Php 2:8 (NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death***, even the death of the cross.

Php 2:9 (NKJV) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Php 2:10 (NKJV) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Php 2:11 (NKJV) and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Luk 12:48 (NKJV) But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Jas 3:1 (NKJV) My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Chafer Dictionary

Perhaps no better word has been written on the subject than that of Archbishop Fénelon (1651-1715), himself a most holy and spiritual man, which runs as follows:

He who seeks not his own interest, but solely God's interest in time and eternity, he is humble. ... Many study exterior humility, but humility which does not flow from love is spurious. The more this exterior stoops, the loftier it inwardly feels itself; but he who is conscious of stooping does not really feel himself to be so low that he can go no further. **People who think much of their humility are very proud**" (cited by F. E. Marsh, *Emblems of the Holy Spirit*, p. 173). Archbishop Fénelon thus declares humility to be the effect of yieldedness to God's will

Humility is obedience to God.

Deu 8:1 (NKJV) "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.

Deu 8:2 (NKJV) And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to **humble** you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Deu 8:3 (NKJV) So He **humbled** you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Deu 8:4 (NKJV) Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.

Deu 8:5 (NKJV) You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, *so* the LORD your God chastens you.

2Ch 7:14 (NKJV) if My people who are called by My name will **humble themselves**, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

1Ki 21:25 (NKJV) But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.

1Ki 21:26 (NKJV) And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all *that* the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

1Ki 21:27 (NKJV) So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

1Ki 21:28 (NKJV) And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

1Ki 21:29 (NKJV) "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? **Because he has humbled himself before Me**, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."

Mic 6:8 (NKJV) He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

Isa 57:15 (NKJV) For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy *place*, With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Pro 15:33 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom, And before honor *is* humility.

Pro 18:12 (NKJV) Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor *is* humility.

Pro 22:4 (NKJV) By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *Are* riches and honor and life.

1Pe 5:5 (NKJV) Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

1Pe 5:6 (NKJV) Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

1Pe 5:7 (NKJV) casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Col 2:18 (NKJV) Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Col 2:19 (NKJV) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.

Humility is a sober and accurate understanding of the measure of faith we have been given.

Rom 12:3 (NKJV) For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

It is also important to know and value the faith and abilities God has granted us.

1Ti 4:12 (NKJV) **Let no one despise your youth,** but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Tit 2:15 (NKJV) Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke **with all authority.** Let no one despise you.

2Ti 4:2 (NKJV) Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Luk 23:3 (NKJV) Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "***It is as you say.***"

Joh 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life.*** No one comes to the Father except through Me.

1Co 11:1 (KJV) Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

2Co 12:6 (NKJV) For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.

2Co 12:11 (NKJV) I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.

2Co 12:12 (NKJV) Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

2Co 12:13 (NKJV) For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

2Co 11:5 (NKJV) For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.

2Co 11:6 (NKJV) Even though *I am* untrained in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.

Humility knows that everything is a gift:

Gen 41:16 (NKJV) So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "*It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*"

1Co 4:7 (NKJV) For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

Joh 5:30 (NKJV) **I can of Myself do nothing.** As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Joh 5:31 (NKJV) "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.

Joh 5:32 (NKJV) There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.

Joh 5:33 (NKJV) You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

Joh 7:18 (NKJV) He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Pro 25:27 (NKJV) *It is not good to eat much honey; So to seek one's own glory is not glory.*

Mat 23:11 (NKJV) But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 (NKJV) **And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

2Ch 34:26 (NKJV) But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard—

2Ch 34:27 (NKJV) **because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God** when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you,*" says the LORD.

Humility

General references

[Deu 9:7](#); [Deu 15:15](#); [Job 5:11](#); [Job 22:29](#); [Job 25:5-6](#); [Psa 9:12](#); [Psa 10:17](#); [Psa 22:6](#); [Psa 22:26](#); [Psa 25:9](#); [Psa 37:11](#); [Psa 69:32](#); [Psa 86:1](#); [Psa 131:1-2](#); [Psa 138:6](#); [Psa 147:6](#); [Psa 149:4](#); [Pro 3:34](#); [Pro 10:8](#); [Pro 11:2](#); [Pro 12:15](#); [Pro 15:33](#); [Pro 18:12](#); [Pro 16:19](#); [Pro 22:4](#); [Pro 25:6-7](#); [Pro 27:2](#); [Pro 29:23](#); [Pro 30:32](#); [Ecc 5:2](#); [Isa 29:19](#); [Isa 51:1](#); [Deu 32:7](#); [Isa 57:15](#); [Isa 66:2](#); [Jer 45:5](#); [Eze 16:63](#); [Mic 6:8](#); [Zep 3:11-12](#); [Mat 5:3](#); [Luk 6:20](#); [Mat 11:29](#); [Mat 18:2-4](#); [Mar 9:33-37](#); [Luk 9:46-48](#); [Mat 20:26-27](#); [Mar 10:43-44](#); [Mat 23:12](#); [Luk 1:52](#); [Luk 10:21](#); [Luk 14:10-11](#); [Luk 17:10](#); [Luk 18:13-14](#); [Luk 22:24-27](#); [Joh 13:14-16](#); [Rom 11:18](#); [Rom 11:20](#); [Rom 11:25](#); [Rom 12:3](#); [Rom 12:10](#); [Rom 12:16](#); [1Co 1:28-29](#); [1Co 2:1-3](#); [1Co 3:18](#); [1Co 10:12](#); [1Co 13:4](#); [2Co 11:30](#); [2Co 12:5-12](#); [Gal 5:26](#); [Gal 6:14](#); [Eph 4:2](#); [Eph 5:21](#); [Php 2:3-11](#); [Col 3:12](#); [Jas 1:9-10](#); [Jas 1:19](#); [Jas 3:1](#); [Jas 4:6](#); [1Pe 5:3](#); [1Pe 5:5-6](#)

Exemplified

[Gen 18:27](#); [Gen 18:32](#); [Gen 32:10](#); [Exo 3:11](#); [Exo 4:10](#); [2Sa 7:18-19](#); [1Ch 17:17](#); [1Ki 3:7](#); [2Ch 1:10](#); [1Ch 29:14](#); [2Ch 2:6](#); [Ezr 9:13](#); [Job 9:14-15](#); [Job 10:15](#); [Job 33:6](#); [Job 40:4-5](#); [Job 42:4-6](#); [Psa 8:3-4](#); [Job 7:17-18](#); [Psa 144:3-4](#); [Psa 73:22](#); [Psa 131:1-2](#); [Psa 141:5](#); [Pro 30:2-3](#); [Isa 6:5](#); [Isa 38:15](#); [Jer 1:6](#); [Jer 10:23-24](#); [Dan 2:30](#); [Gen 41:16](#); [Act 3:12](#); [Mat 3:14](#); [Mat 15:27](#); [Mat 25:37-40](#); [Luk 7:6-7](#); [Mat 8:8](#); [Joh 1:27](#); [Joh 3:29-30](#); [Rom 7:18](#); [1Co 15:10](#); [2Co 3:5](#); [2Co 12:7](#); [Eph 3:8](#); [Php 3:12-13](#); [Php 4:12](#); [1Ti 1:15](#); [1Co 15:9](#); [Rev 4:10](#)

Instances of:

Joseph

[Gen 41:16](#)

David

[1Sa 18:18-23](#); [1Sa 24:14](#); [1Sa 26:20](#); [2Sa 7:18-29](#); [1Ch 17:16-27](#)

Mephibosheth

[2Sa 9:8](#)

Ahab

[1Ki 21:29](#)

Josiah

[2Ch 34:27](#)

Elihu

[Job 32:4-7](#)

Isaiah

[Isa 6:5](#)

Elizabeth

[Luk 1:43](#)

John the Baptist

[Mar 1:7](#); [Luk 3:16](#)

Cornelius

[Act 10:33](#)

Paul

[Rom 1:12](#); [Rom 16:7](#)

Peter

[Luk 5:8](#); [1Pe 5:1](#)

John

[Rev 1:9](#)

Nave

HUMILITY

[Pro 15:33](#) before glory there is **h.**

[Pro 22:4](#) result of **h.** is riches and glory

[Col 2:18](#) , [Col 2:23](#) a form of worship and mock **h.**

NWT

Humility

What Humility Precedes

[Pro 15:33](#); [Pro 18:12](#).

What Humility Brings

[Pro 22:4](#).

TB

Humility

Necessary to the service of God

[Mic 6:8](#);

Christ an example of
[Mat 11:29](#); [Joh 13:14](#); [Joh 13:15](#); [Php 2:5-8](#);
A characteristic of saints
[Psa 34:2](#);
THE WHO HAVE
Regarded by God
[Psa 138:6](#); [Isa 66:2](#);
Heard by God
[Psa 9:12](#); [Isa 10:17](#);
Enjoy the presence of God
[Isa 57:15](#);
Delivered by God
[Job 22:29](#);
Lifted up by God
[Jas 4:10](#);
Exalted by God
[Luk 14:11](#); [Luk 18:14](#);
Are greatest in Christ's kingdom
[Mat 18:4](#); [Mat 20:26-28](#);
Receive more grace
[Pro 3:34](#); [Jas 4:6](#);
Upheld by honour
[Pro 18:12](#); [Pro 29:23](#);
Is before honour
[Pro 15:33](#);
Leads to riches, honour, and life
[Pro 22:4](#);
SAINTS SHOULD
Put on
[Col 3:12](#);
Be clothed with
[1Pe 5:5](#);
Walk with
[Eph 4:1](#); [Eph 4:2](#);
Beware of false
[Col 2:18](#); [Col 2:23](#);
Afflictions intended to produce
[Lev 26:41](#); [Deu 8:3](#); [Lam 3:20](#);
Want of, condemned
[2Ch 33:23](#); [2Ch 36:12](#); [Jer 44:10](#); [Dan 5:22](#);

Temporal judgments averted by

[2Ch 7:14](#); [2Ch 12:6](#); [2Ch 12:7](#);

Excellency of

[Pro 16:19](#);

Blessedness of

[Mat 5:3](#);

Exemplified

Abraham

[Gen 18:27](#);

Jacob

[Gen 32:10](#);

Moses

[Exo 3:11](#); [Exo 4:10](#);

Joshua

[Jos 7:6](#);

Gideon

[Jdg 6:15](#);

David

[1Ch 29:14](#);

Hezekiah

[2Ch 32:26](#);

Manasseh

[2Ch 33:12](#);

Josiah

[2Ch 34:27](#);

Job

[Job 40:4](#); [Job 42:6](#);

Isaiah

[Isa 6:5](#);

Jeremiah

[Jer 1:6](#);

John the Baptist

[Mat 3:14](#);

Centurion

[Mat 8:8](#);

Woman of Canaan

[Mat 15:27](#);

Elizabeth

[Luk 1:43](#);

Peter

[Luk 5:8](#);

Paul

[Act 20:19](#);

Torrey

Humility

tapeinophrosyne ([G5012](#)) Humility, Lowliness

praotes ([G4236](#)) Meekness

The mission of Christ's gospel involves putting the mighty down from their seats and exalting the humble and meek. In accordance with this mission, the gospel dethroned the heathen virtue of megalopsychia and replaced it with tapeinophrosyne, the despised Christian virtue. The gospel stripped the former of the honor it had unjustly assumed and delivered the latter from the unjust dishonor that previously had attached to it. One Christian writer has called tapeinophrosyne the treasure house that contains all the other virtues. Tapeinophrosyne is a fruit of the gospel. No Greek writer employed it before the Christian era, and apart from the influence of Christian writers, it was not used later. In the Septuagint, tapeinophron ([Pro 29:23](#)) and tapeinophronein (to humble; [Psa 130:2](#)) each occur once, and both words are used in an honorable fashion. Plutarch also employed tapeinophron, though in a bad sense. The ways in which heathen writers used tapeinos ([G5011](#)), tapeinotes, and other words of this family indicate how they would have employed tapeinophrosyne. There are few instances where tapeinos signifies anything other than grovelling, slavish, mean-spirited behavior. Tapeinos is associated with aneleutheros, andrapododes, agennes, katephes, adoxos, doulikos and douloprepes, and chamaizelos. Similarly, the German Demuth (humility), which originated in the heathen period of the language, originally referred to "a slavish spirit" and attained its present honorable position through Christian influence.

The exceptional uses of tapeinos, however, are more numerous than some will admit. Plato related tapeinos to being "orderly," and Demosthenes spoke of "moderate and humble [tapeinoi] words." On more than one occasion, Xenophon contrasted the tapeinos with the "arrogant." According to Plutarch, the purpose of divine punishment was so that the soul might become "thoughtful and humble [tapeine] and fearful toward God." In addition to these earlier intimations of the honor that one day would be associated with the words for humility, a passage in Aristotle vindicates the Christian use of tapeinophrosyne. Having confessed how hard it is for a

man "to be truly magnificent," Aristotle observed that to think humbly of oneself, where that humble estimate is the true one, is not a culpable meanness of spirit but a true prudence. If that is correct, then since one's humble self-estimate is true for everyone, Aristotle unconsciously vindicated tapeinophrosyne as a virtue that every man should possess. Even according to his standard, Aristotle confessed that "to be truly magnificent" was difficult. But the Christian, convinced by the Spirit of God and having God's perfect standard of righteousness, knows that it is not merely difficult but impossible. The Christian definition of tapeinophrosyne is not merely modesty or the absence of pretension that the best heathen writers referred to; it is not a self-made virtue. By characterizing pride as making ourselves small when we are great, Chrysostom brought pride in under the disguise of humility. Bernard's definition is truer and deeper: "Virtue exists when a person through a most genuine self-evaluation deems himself worthless." Tapeinophrosyne involves evaluating ourselves as small because we are so; it requires us to think truly, and therefore humbly, of ourselves.

How is this Christian view of tapeinophrosyne as that which derives from a sense of unworthiness compatible with Christ's claim to this virtue, since he is sinless? The answer is that for the sinner, tapeinophrosyne involves the confession of sin (because this is the sinner's true condition); but for the unfallen creature, it is not an acknowledgment of sinfulness (which would be untrue) but of creatureliness, of absolute dependence, of possessing nothing and of receiving all things from God. And thus because he is a creature, the virtue of humility belongs to the highest angel before the throne, and even it is true to the Lord of glory himself. In his human nature, Jesus must exemplify true humility, true creaturely dependence. It is only as a man that Christ claimed to be tapeinos, for his human life was a constant living on the fullness of his Father's love, as becomes the creature in the presence of its Creator.

The gospel of Christ did not rehabilitate praotes as completely as it did tapeinophrosyne because praotes did not need rehabilitating to the same extent. Praotes did not need to be transformed from a bad sense to a good one but needed only to be lifted from a lower level of good to a higher one. Based on Aristotle's portrait of the praos (G4235) and of the praotes, it is apparent that praotes needed such an elevating. When the heathen virtue is compared with the Christian one, it is obvious that revelation has given to these words a depth, a richness, and a significance they did not previously possess. Aristotle, the great moralist of Greece, defined praotes as the "mean concerning anger" between the two extremes of irascibility and the lack of irascibility. And in Aristotle's view, praotes leaned more toward the

latter and easily ran into this defect. Aristotle praised the virtue of praotes primarily because it helps a man to retain his own equanimity and composure, rather than for any more noble reason. Plutarch associated praotes with metriopatheia, acholia, anexikakia, megalopatheia, eupeitheia and eukolia. Plutarch's graceful little essay, Concerning Lack of Irascibility (Peri aorgesias), does not contain a more noble concept of praotes than that found in Aristotle, though we might have looked for something higher from him. Plato contrasted praotes with agriotes, Aristotle with chalepotes and Plutarch (or some other writer using his name) with apotomia. Apparently, all of these writers attached a somewhat superficial meaning to Praotes. Certain modern expositors who rule out the possibility that the New Testament writers modified the meaning of classical Greek words restrict the meaning of praotes in the New Testament to the meaning it had in the best classical writings. By doing so, however, they deprive themselves (and those who accept their interpretations) of much of the deeper teaching in Scripture. The Scriptural praotes is manifested not only in a man's outward behavior, nor merely in his relations with others, nor in his natural disposition. It is an inwrought grace of the soul that is exercised primarily toward God ([Mat 11:29](#); [Jas 1:21](#)). It is a quality of spirit that accepts God's dealings with us as good, without disputing or resisting them. It is closely linked with tapeinophrosyne and follows directly upon it ([Eph 4:2](#); [Col 3:12](#); cf. [Zep 3:12](#)), because it is only the humble heart that is also meek, that does not fight against God or struggle with him.

This meekness exists first of all before God, but it is also to be exercised before men even evil men knowing that the insults and injuries they inflict are permitted and employed by God to chasten and purify his elect. This was the root of David's praotes when Shimei cursed and flung stones at him. David realized that the Lord had bidden Shimei ([2Sa 16:11](#)) and that it was just for him to suffer these things, however unjustly Shimei might inflict them. True Christian praotes must spring from similar convictions. The one who is truly meek acknowledges himself as a sinner among sinners, and this knowledge of his own sin teaches him to meekly endure the provocations of others and not to withdraw from the burdens their sins may impose on him ([Gal 6:1](#); [2Ti 2:25](#); [Tit 3:2](#)).

Praotes, or meekness (if more is meant than mere gentleness of manner, that is, if the Christian virtue of meekness of spirit is referred to), must rest on the deeper foundations of tapeinophrosyne, on which alone it can subsist. Praotes, though not more precious than tapeinophrosyne, is a grace in advance of it and one that presupposes it and that is not able to exist without it.

Trench

Humility

hū-mil' i-ti (עוֹנָה, 'ānāwāh; ταπεινοφροσύνη, tapeinophrosúnē):

(1) The noun occurs in the Old Testament only in [Pro 15:33](#); [Pro 18:12](#); [Pro 22:4](#), but the adjective “humble” appears frequently as the translation of 'ānī, 'ānāw, shāphāl, meaning also “poor,” “afflicted”; the verb, as the translation of 'ānāh, “to afflict,” “to humble,” and of kāna', “to be or become humbled”; cānā', “to be lowly,” occurs in [Mic 6:8](#). For “humble” ([Psa 9:12](#); [Psa 10:12](#)) the Revised Version (British and American) has “poor”; [Psa 10:17](#); [Psa 34:2](#); [Psa 69:32](#), “meek”; for “humbled” ([Psa 35:13](#)), “afflicted” ([Isa 2:11](#); [Isa 10:33](#)), “brought low”; for “He humbleth himself” ([Isa 2:9](#)) “is brought low,” margin “humbleth himself”; [Psa 10:10](#), “boweth down”; tapeinophrosunē is translated “humility” ([Col 2:18](#), [Col 2:23](#); [1Pe 5:5](#)); in several other places it is translated “lowliness” and “lowliness of mind”; tapeinós is translated “humble” ([Jas 4:6](#); [1Pe 5:5](#); elsewhere “lowly,” etc.; [1Pe 3:8](#), tapeinóphrōn), the Revised Version (British and American) “humble-minded”; tapeinōō, “to humble,” occurs frequently ([Mat 18:4](#); [Mat 23:12](#), etc.); tapeínōsis is “humiliation” ([Act 8:33](#)); for “vile body” ([Php 3:21](#)) the Revised Version (British and American) gives “body of our humiliation.”

(2) (a) In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, humility is an essential characteristic of true piety, or of the man who is right with God. God humbles men in order to bring them to Himself ([Deu 8:2](#), [Deu 8:3](#), etc.), and it is when men humble themselves before Him that they are accepted ([1Ki 21:29](#); [2Ch 7:14](#), etc.); to “walk humbly with thy God” completes the Divine requirements ([Mic 6:8](#)). In [Psa 18:35](#) ([2Sa 22:36](#)) the quality is ascribed to God Himself, “Thy gentleness (or condescension) hath made me great.” Of “him that hath his seat on high” it is said, (Hebrew) “humbleth (shāphēl) himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth” ([Psa 113:6](#)). It is in the humble heart that “the high and lofty One,... whose name is Holy” dwells ([Isa 57:15](#); compare [Isa 66:2](#)).

(b) The word tapeinophrosunē is not found in classical Greek (Lightfoot); in the New Testament (with the exception of [1Pe 5:5](#)) it is Pauline. In Greek pre-Christian writers tapeinos is, with a few exceptions in Plato and Platonic writers, used in a bad or inferior sense - as denoting something evil or unworthy. The prominence it gained in Christian thought indicates the new conception of man in relation to God, to himself, and to his fellows, which is due to Christianity. It by no means implies slavishness or servility; nor is it inconsistent with a right estimate of oneself, one's gifts and calling of

God, or with proper self-assertion when called for. But the habitual frame of mind of a child of God is that of one who feels not only that he owes all his natural gifts, etc., to God, but that he has been the object of undeserved redeeming love, and who regards himself as being not his own, but God's in Christ. He *cannot* exalt himself, for he knows that he has nothing of himself. The humble mind is thus at the root of all other graces and virtues. Self-exaltation spoils everything. There can be no real *love* without humility. "Love," said Paul, "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" ([1Co 13:4](#)). As Augustine said, humility is first, second and third in Christianity. (c) Jesus not only strongly impressed His disciples with the need of humility, but was in Himself its supreme example. He described Himself as "meek and lowly (*tapeinos*) in heart" ([Mat 11:29](#)). The first of the Beatitudes was to "the poor in spirit" ([Mat 5:3](#)), and it was "the meek" who should "inherit the earth." Humility is the way to true greatness: he who should "humble himself as this little child" should be "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"; "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" ([Mat 18:4](#); [Mat 23:12](#); [Luk 14:11](#); [Luk 18:14](#)). To the humble mind truth is revealed ([Mat 11:25](#); [Luk 10:21](#)). Jesus set a touching example of humility in His washing His disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17).

(d) Paul, therefore, makes an earnest appeal to Christians ([Php 2:1-11](#)) that they should cherish and manifest the Spirit of their Lord's humility - "in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself," and adduces the supreme example of the self-emptying (*kénōsis*) of Christ: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," etc. The rendering of *heautōn ekénōsen* ([Php 2:7](#) the King James Version) by "he humbled himself" has given rise to the designation of the Incarnation as "the Humiliation of Christ."

(e) There is a false humility which Paul warns against, a self-sought, "voluntary humility" ([Col 2:18](#), [Col 2:23](#)). This still exists in many forms, and has to be guarded against. It is not genuine humility when we humble ourselves with the feeling that we are greater than others, but only when we do not think of self at all. It is not alone the sense of sin that should create the humble spirit: Jesus had no sin. It belongs not merely to the creature, but even to a *son* in relation to God. There may be much self-satisfaction where sinfulness is confessed. We may be proud of our humility. It is necessary also always to beware of "the pride that apes humility."

ISBE

HD

Humility

HUMILITY.—Trench defines ‘humility’ as the esteeming of ourselves small, inasmuch as we are so; the thinking truly, and because truly, therefore lowly, of ourselves. Alford, Ellicott, Salmond, Vincent, and many others agree. It is an inadequate and faulty definition. A man may be small and may realize his smallness, and yet be far from being humble. His spirit may be full of envy instead of humility. He may be depressed in spirit because he sees his own meanness and general worthlessness, and yet he may be as rebellious against his lot or his constitutional proclivities as he is clearly cognizant of them. Low-mindedness is not lowly-mindedness. The exhortation of [Php 2:3](#) does not mean that every man ought to think that everybody else is better than himself in moral character, or in outward conduct, or in natural or inherited powers. That would be impossible in some cases and untruthful in many others. It is not an exhortation to either an impossibility or an untruthfulness. A better definition of the Christian grace of humility is found in the union of highest self-respect with uttermost abandon of sacrifice in service. A man who knows his own superior worth and yet is willing to serve his inferiors in Christian love is a humble man. The classic example in the NT is [Joh 13:3-15](#). The Lord, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and would go again unto God, knowing His incomparable superiority to every one in that company, was yet so meek and lowly in heart, so humble in spirit and ready for service, that He girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples’ feet. The consciousness of His own transcendent worth was in no respect inconsistent with His humility. Genuine humility leads the strong to serve the weak. It never underestimates its own worth, but in utter unselfishness it is ready to sacrifice its own claims at any moment for the general good. Genuine humility loses all its self-conceit but never loses its self-respect. It is consistent with the highest dignity of character and life. Hence we may rightly call the Incarnation the Humiliation of Christ. He stood at the head of the heavenly hierarchies. He was equal with God. There was no dignity in the universe like unto His. Yet He humbled Himself to become a man. He made Himself of no reputation. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He was the servant of all. There was no humility in the universe like unto His. He never forgot His dignity. When Pilate asked Him if He were a king, He answered that He was. He stood in kingly majesty before the mob, in kingly serenity before the magistrates; He hung as King upon the cross. Yet He never forgot His humility. Being found in fashion as a

man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. St. Paul exhorts, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus' ([Php 2:5-11](#)). God giveth grace to all who are thus humble ([Jas 4:6](#)).

When Augustine was asked, 'What is the first article in the Christian religion?' he answered, 'Humility.' And they said, 'What is the second?' and he said, 'Humility.' And they said, 'What is the third?' and he said the third time, 'Humility.' Pascal said: 'Vanity has taken so firm a hold on the heart of man, that a porter, a hodman, a turn-spit, can talk greatly of himself, and is for having his admirers. Philosophers who write of the contempt of glory do yet desire the glory of writing well, and those who read their compositions would not lose the glory of having read them. We are so presumptuous as that we desire to be known to all the world; and even to those who are not to come into the world till we have left it. And at the same time we are so little and vain as that the esteem of five or six persons about us is enough to content and amuse us.'

D. A. Hayes.

Hastings

HUMILITY

The words 'humility' and 'humble', which are from the same basic word, have a variety of meanings. In some cases they are associated with ideas of poverty or affliction ([1Sa 2:8](#); [Psa 37:11](#); [Psa 37:14](#); [Isa 29:19](#); [Php 4:12](#); [Jas 1:9](#)), in others with ideas of embarrassment or shame ([Isa 53:3](#); [Isa 53:8](#); [Act 8:33](#); [2Co 9:4](#); [2Co 11:7](#); [2Co 12:21](#); [Php 3:21](#); [Jas 1:10](#)). Their most common usage, however, is in relation to attitudes of modesty, selflessness, gentleness, grace, meekness and forbearance. Humility in this sense is one of the virtues most pleasing to God. Its opposite, pride, is one of the evils most hateful to him ([Num 12:3](#); [Pro 6:16-17](#); [Dan 5:22-23](#); [Mic 6:8](#); [Jas 4:6](#); [1Pe 5:5](#); see PRIDE).

Jesus Christ is the great example of humility. In an act of total self-denial, the eternal Son of God humbled himself to the extent of taking human form and in the end dying to save sinners ([Php 2:5-11](#)). He was never boastful and never acted in a way that advanced his own interests. Always he submitted to his Father's will, so that he not only served God but also served those among whom he lived ([Mat 12:19-20](#); [Mat 20:28](#); [Joh 5:30-32](#)).

Just as Jesus humbled himself in living and dying for sinners, so sinners must humble themselves in repenting of their sins if they are to receive God's forgiveness. God gives sinners no cause to boast in anything they

might achieve. They can do nothing but acknowledge how helpless they are before God and humbly accept God's mercy ([2Ch 7:14](#); [2Ch 12:6-7](#); [2Ch 34:27](#); [Luk 18:9-14](#); [Rom 3:27](#); [Rom 10:3](#)). Humility characterized Christ's kingship ([Mat 21:5](#)), and only through humility can anyone enter his kingdom ([Mat 18:1-4](#)).

Christians have a responsibility to develop humility in their lives. It is part of the life to which God has called them ([Eph 4:1-2](#); [Col 3:12](#)), it is a characteristic of life in God's kingdom ([Mat 20:20-27](#)) and it is the product of the Spirit's work in the life of the individual ([Gal 5:23](#)). If they are to learn humility, they must be willing to take the lowest place and serve others ([Luk 22:24-27](#); [Joh 13:3-17](#)). Such humility will help produce genuine fellowship in the church. It will prevent Christians from competing with each other to see who is the greatest among them ([Mar 9:33-37](#); [Rom 12:16](#); [2Co 10:12](#); [Gal 6:3](#); [Eph 4:2](#); [Php 2:3](#)).

Those who look for status and praise may gain what they seek, but their reward will be short-lived ([Mat 6:1-5](#); [Mat 6:16](#)). God exalts those who humble themselves, but humbles those who exalt themselves ([Pro 3:34](#); [Pro 15:33](#); [Pro 18:12](#); [Isa 2:11](#); [Isa 5:15](#); [Mat 23:12](#); [Luk 1:48-53](#); [Jas 4:10](#); [1Pe 5:6](#)).

FB

Humility

A prominent Christian grace ([Rom 12:3](#); [Rom 15:17](#), [Rom 15:18](#); [1Co 3:5-7](#); [2Co 3:5](#); [Php 4:11-13](#)). It is a state of mind well pleasing to God ([1Pe 3:4](#)); it preserves the soul in tranquillity ([Psa 69:32](#), [Psa 69:33](#)), and makes us patient under trials ([Job 1:22](#)).

Christ has set us an example of humility ([Php 2:6-8](#)). We should be led thereto by a remembrance of our sins ([Lam 3:39](#)), and by the thought that it is the way to honour ([Pro 16:18](#)), and that the greatest promises are made to the humble ([Psa 147:6](#); [Isa 57:15](#); [Isa 66:2](#); [1Pe 5:5](#)). It is a "great paradox in Christianity that it makes humility the avenue to glory."

Easton

Humility

HUMILITY

Humility is a divine characteristic to be found in human hearts only as inwrought by the Spirit of God. It is far removed from self-depreciation or an inferiority complex. Perhaps no better word has been written on the

subject than that of Archbishop Fénelon (1651-1715), himself a most holy and spiritual man, which runs as follows:

“He who seeks not his own interest, but solely God’s interest in time and eternity, he is humble. ... Many study exterior humility, but humility which does not flow from love is spurious. The more this exterior stoops, the loftier it inwardly feels itself; but he who is conscious of stooping does not really feel himself to be so low that he can go no further. People who think much of their humility are very proud” (cited by F. E. Marsh, *Emblems of the Holy Spirit*, p. 173). Archbishop Fénelon thus declares humility to be the effect of yieldedness to God’s will.

In the Old Testament this word appears as a noun 3 times and in all its forms about 40 times. It is found in the New Testament some 15 times. It always has the meaning of true piety (cf. [Deu 8:2-3](#); [1Ki 21:29](#); [2Ch 7:14](#)). Such virtue was anticipated under the law ([Mic 6:8](#)). Humility as a virtue occupies a large place in the coming kingdom ([Isa 57:15](#); [Mat 5:3](#); [Mat 11:25](#); [Mat 18:4](#); [Mat 23:12](#); [Luk 10:21](#); [Luk 14:11](#); [Luk 18:14](#)). As a fruit of the Spirit it is wrought in the believer today ([Gal 5:22-23](#); cf. [1Co 13:4](#); [1Pe 5:5-6](#)).

Since man has no merit in himself before God but receives all that he has, humility is only the right and natural attitude. Christ was humble, still not because He was a sinner or meritless. To become conscious of humility is its utter ruin.

Chafer

Humility

The attitude of the Christian that teaches us not to "...think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment..." ([Rom 12:3](#)). It teaches us to prefer others over ourselves ([Rom 12:10](#)). It is knowing our true position before God. It is not self-abasement or demeaning one’s self. "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" ([Jas 4:6](#)). Humility is necessary to be a disciple of Jesus ([Mat 18:3-4](#)). The humility of Jesus is described in [Php 2:5-8](#), "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (NIV).

CT

HUMILITY

A disposition of mind wherein a person has a low opinion of himself and his advantages. It is a branch of internal worship, or of experimental religion and godliness. It is the effect of divine grace operating on the soul, and always characterises the true Christian. The heathen philosophers were so little acquainted with this virtue, that they had no name for it: what they meant by the word we use, was meanness and baseness of mind. To consider this grace a little more particularly, it may be observed,

1. That humility does not oblige a man to wrong the truth, or himself, by entertaining a meaner or worse opinion of himself than he deserves.—
2. Nor does it oblige a man, right or wrong, to give every body else the preference to himself. A wise man cannot believe himself inferior to the ignorant multitude; nor the virtuous man that he is not so good as those whose lives are vicious.—
3. Nor does it oblige a man to treat himself with contempt in his words or actions: it looks more like affectation than humility, when a man says such things in his own dispraise as others know, or he himself believes, to be false: and it is plain, also, that this is often done merely as a bait to catch the praises of others.

Humility consists,

1. In not attributing to ourselves any excellence or good which we have not.—
2. In not over-rating any thing we do.—
3. In not taking an immoderate delight in ourselves.—
4. In not assuming more of the praise of a quality or action than belongs to us.—
5. In an inward sense of our many imperfections and sins.—
6. In ascribing all we have and are to the grace of God.

True humility will express itself,

1. By the modesty of our appearance. The humble man will consider his age, abilities, character, function, &c. and act accordingly.—
2. By the modesty of our pursuits. We shall not aim at any thing above our strength, but prefer a good to a great name.—
3. It will express itself by the modesty of our conversation and behaviour: we shall not be loquacious, obstinate, forward, envious, discontented, or ambitious.

The advantages of humility are numerous:

1. It is well pleasing to God, [1Pe 3:4](#).—
2. It has great influence on us in the performance of all other duties, praying, hearing, converse, &c.—

3. It indicates that more grace shall be given, [Jas 4:6](#). [Psa 25:9](#)
4. It preserves the soul in great tranquility and contentment, [Psa 69:32](#); [Psa 33:1-22](#)
5. It makes us patient and resigned under afflictions, [Job 1:22](#)
6. It enables us to exercise moderation in every thing.

To obtain this excellent spirit we should remember,

1. The example of Christ, [Php 2:6-8](#)
2. That heaven is a place of humility, [Rev 5:8](#)
3. That our sins are numerous, and deserve the greatest punishment, [Lam 3:39](#)
4. That humility is the way to honour, [Pro 16:18](#)
5. That the greatest promises of good are made to the humble, Is. 57: 15, 56: 2. [1Pe 5:5](#). [Psa 147:6](#). [Mat 5:5](#).

Grove's Mor. Phil. vol. 2: p. 286; Evan's Christian Temper, vol. 1: ser. 1; Watts on Humility; Baxter's Christian Directory, 5: 1. p. 496; Hale's Cont. p. 110; Gill's Body of Div. p. 151, vol. 3: Walker's Ser. 4: ser. 3.

BD

HUMILITY

The opposite of pride, in its nature and in the degree of its prevalence. It is often extolled in the Bible, [Pro 15:33](#) 16:19; and the Savior especially exalts it, [Mat 18:4](#), and ennobles and endears it by his own example, [Joh 13:4-17](#) [Php 2:5-8](#). Every created being, however holy, should possess it; but in the character of the sinful sons of men it should become a fundamental and allpervading trait, to continue forever.

ATSB

Humility

HUMILITY.—This virtue or grace distinguished the leaders of OT history like Abraham and Moses ([Gen 18:27](#), [Num 12:3](#)), and was inculcated by the prophets as a chief duty ([Mic 6:8](#)). It belongs even to the earlier revelation of God's character ('that humbleth himself,' [Psa 113:6](#)), and is the key to man's communion with Him ([Isa 57:15](#)). In Judaism and the Rabbinical literature we meet with a variety of examples and maxims enforcing the truth that 'God is the highest type of humility.' These anticipations prepare us for the new and enlarged conception of humility which rills the NT, and was embodied in the teaching, example, and character of Jesus Christ. The moral quality of our Saviour's personality lies here ([Mat 11:29](#)), and on this foundation of astonishing humility, exemplified on the cross, St. Paul bases

his great ethical appeal ([Php 2:5](#) ff.). It may be claimed that the gospel alone has popularized humility, but the temper of Christ's disciples in every age proves that it is an excellence of rare and difficult attainment.

i. Use and meaning of the word.—The noun ([ταπεινοφροσύνη](#), Heb. [הִקְנָו](#), Vulgate *humilitas*, Germ. *Demut*) does not occur till it is employed commonly in the NT (Lightfoot on [Php 2:3](#)); it is 'a birth of the Gospel' (Trench, *Syn. of the NT*, § 42). In contrast to the low and servile sense attaching to it in classical writings, humility in the LXX Septuagint, Apocr. [Note: Apocrypha, Apocryphal.], and NT becomes the designation 'of the noblest and most necessary of all virtues' (Cremer's *Lex.*). It rests on a lowly and unpretending view of one's self, and is opposed to the workings of the ambitious spirit ([μεγαλοφροσύνη](#), [ὑψηλοφροσύνη](#)). The term refers mainly to inward character, and sometimes to outward condition. Of humility as the animating principle of Christian character, Jesus Himself was the great example, being 'lowly in heart' ([Mat 11:29](#)), not merely in appearance like the professional religious leaders of the time. Pharisaism is the deadly enemy of humility or the religion of healthy-mindedness. The moral temper that inspired Christ's life and service is echoed by St. Paul, when he singles out the motive that prompted his labours ('serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind,' [Act 20:19](#)). Elsewhere humility is enjoined, along with kindred graces, as the means of averting unholy disputes and of promoting co-operation in the Church and among the members of the Christian society ([Mat 18:4](#); [Mat 23:12](#), [Eph 4:2](#), [Php 2:3](#), [Col 3:12](#)). An exceptional use of the term occurs in [Col 2:18](#); [Col 2:23](#), where the Apostle guards his readers against the counterfeit of this virtue ('a voluntary humility'). In some instances the humble are viewed in the light of their earthly condition, which God may wonderfully raise and alter ([Luk 1:52](#)), and which, notwithstanding its indignities and trials, should be borne submissively and cheerfully ([Jas 1:9](#)). This class of sufferers corresponds to the afflicted and meek of the OT ([נָוִי](#), [עָנִי](#)), and would be numerous among the peasantry or *fellahîn* of an oppressed and lawless country (Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek*, s.v.). The 'poor in spirit' spoken of in the first of the Beatitudes ([Mat 5:3](#), cf. [Luk 6:20](#)) are probably best understood as placed in such circumstances. In agreement with this, Ritschl (*op. cit. infra*) defines [ταπεινοφροσύνη](#) as 'that temper inclining to the service of God which accepts resignedly an oppressed and wretched condition.' The term, therefore, as one of deep import, is freshly coined in the NT.

ii. Contrast between Greek and Christian Ethics.—The rise of this grace creates an epoch. 'Humility is a vice with heathen moralists, but a virtue with Christian apostles' (Lightfoot on [Col 2:18](#)). In particular, it marks the

opposition to the Greek idea of ‘high-mindedness’ (art. ‘Ethics,’ by H. Sidgwick in *Ency. Brit.*⁹ [Note: designates the particular edition of the work referred]), and the advance in ethical sentiment and the standard of judgment due to Christianity. A presentiment of the Christian virtue may be met with in Greek writers (see examples in Neander’s *Church History*, vol. i. p. 26 [English translation], and in Trench, *NT Syn.*), but their use of [ταπεινός](#) in any noble sense is rare. The Greeks undoubtedly had their distinguishing qualities, but this was not one of them.

Cf. interesting note of conversation in Morley’s *Life of Gladstone*, iii. p. 466. ‘Mr. G.—I admit there is no Greek word of good credit for the virtue of humility. J. M.—[ταπεινοτης](#)? But that has an association of meanness. Mr. G.—Yes; a shabby sort of humility. Humility as a sovereign grace is the creation of Christianity.’

Greek Ethics, as expressed and systematized by Aristotle, the ancient master of moral analysis and definition, fostered pride, the genius of later Stoicism, and regarded the humble as contemptible, mean-spirited, and without force or aspiration. Aristotle’s picture of the ‘great-souled’ man and his exaggerated sense of self-importance have a certain air of loftiness ([μεγαλοψυχία](#)), but fall below the standard which obliges the Christian to recognize his duty to others, and to treat with consideration those who are intellectually and socially inferior. The conception of humility, therefore, as it controls the Christian, lies outside the system of Aristotle (see *Nic. Ethiopic* bk. iv. ch. 3 [Sir A. Grant’s ed. vol. ii. pp. 72–78]). This difference between Greek and Christian ideas of greatness and humility is fundamental, and the change was brought about by Christ’s revelation of the character of God. Of Aristotle’s great-souled man it is said—‘his movements are slow, his voice is deep, and his diction stately’ (Grant, vol. ii. p. 77, note). This measured efflorescence of pride reappears in Christ’s portraiture of the Pharisee in the temple; but the Publican, the opposite and acceptable type, shows how influential, in Christian experience, is the thought of God, and how closely connected are humility, prayer, and confession of sin. In accordance with Augustine’s well-known saying (quoted by Calvin, *Institutio*, bk. ii. ch. 2), humility comes first, second, third, and always, among the precepts of the Christian religion, and it marks the cleavage between Greek and Christian ideals. The magnificent figure drawn by the Greek philosopher disappears, and, instead, Christ presents the image of the little child ([Mat 18:2](#)).

iii. Our Lord’s example and teaching

1. The great saying which goes to the root of the matter—‘I am meek and lowly in heart’ ([Mat 11:29](#)), has been variously interpreted (see art. by

Herrmann, mentioned below), and even called in question as authentic. Martineau asks—‘What meek and lowly soul was ever known to set itself forth as such and commend its own humility as the model for others?’ and adds, ‘did a Saviour bear such testimony of himself, his testimony would not be true’ (*Seat of Authority in Religion*² [Note: designates the particular edition of the work referred] , p. 583). But the mode of speaking Christ adopted and the claim He put forward would not really seem incongruous in a ‘Teacher of Israel’ (Bruce, *Expos. Gr. Test.* note *ad loc.*); and, besides, the objection reads a false tone into the original utterance, and ignores the special nature of Christ’s consciousness. Our Lord was more than a ‘meek and lowly soul,’ and had reason for presenting Himself as a model and a winning type to humanity. His humility clothed and concealed His essential dignity, and in speaking as He did He was conscious at the same time of standing in a unique relation to God ([Mat 11:27](#), cf. [Joh 13:3](#)). Indeed, the union on Christ’s part of ‘unbounded personal pretensions’ with an unconscious humility that regarded His importance to the world as ‘an objective fact with which his own opinion of himself had nothing to do’ (*Ecce Homo*, ch. 15) is undeniable, and reminds us that majesty and meekness were the two poles of His mysterious yet harmonious character. Christ’s humility, however, does not rest on a phrase, but was carried out in the lowly setting of His earthly life. His cradle in the manger at Bethlehem and His subjection in the home at Nazareth, His quiet entrance, at the hands of the Baptist, on public life, His restraint in the use of His supernatural powers, and His dislike of consequent honour and fame, His frequent periods of retirement, His choice of followers and friends, His sympathies with little children and humble suppliants ([Mar 10:13-16](#); [Mar 7:24-30](#)), His appreciation of the smallest offering and the simplest service ([Luk 21:1-4](#), [Mat 10:42](#)), and, finally, His submission to the experiences concentrated in the week of His Passion and Crucifixion, all attest the consistency of His character as One who was ‘meek and lowly in heart,’ and who, at every step of His career, plainly and profoundly ‘humbled himself’ ([Php 2:8](#)).

2. Passing from Christ’s example, the main lines of His teaching are two (1) *Humility in relation to God, or the Law of Grace*.—We are introduced here to the most powerful among the motives to humility, and to a relation deeper than any that influences us in the society of our fellow-men. In Wendt’s language—‘Humility is the conscious lowliness we feel before God in view of His superabundant love and holy majesty, and in contrast to our own unworthiness, guilt, and entire dependence on His grace’ (*The Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i. p. 341, note [English translation]). We cannot therefore exaggerate our worth or assert our claims before God: the part we

play is that of ‘unprofitable servants’ who, after all their performances, should be filled neither with the sense of merit nor the spirit of boasting ([Luk 17:10](#)). In the parable, which is a gem of teaching on this point, Jesus enforces on us the duty of humility towards God, the need of genuine self-abasement and confession of sin, as we see and feel our unworthiness in the Divine presence ([Luk 18:9-14](#)). He represents God as turning away from the shallow and sounding words of the Pharisee, but giving His mercy freely to the penitent publican who could not look up. For, as a fine Jewish saying puts it, ‘While God despises what is broken among the animals, He loves in man a broken heart.’ This is a fundamental law of the Kingdom of heaven and the indispensable condition of grace: ‘for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted’ (cf. [Pro 3:34](#); [1Pe 5:5](#)).

Prof. Dowden, in writing of Milton’s view of the intercourse between God and the soul, remarks—‘There are two humilities—that which bows and that which soars, the humility of a servant who looks down, the humility of a son who gazes up. Milton’s humility invigorates itself in the effort to ascend. He would not prostrate himself in the presence of material symbols, but would enter as a glad child into the courts of heaven’ (*Puritan and Anglican*, p. 167). This is the humility that Christ welcomes, and that makes religion not stiff and heavy with ceremonial, but simple, reverent, glad, and pleasing to God. On no other terms is grace given or fellowship with God possible. ‘Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in nowise enter therein’ ([Luk 18:17](#)).

(2) *Humility in relation to men, or the Law of Service.*—While it is true that humility ‘is not primarily concerned with our relation to other men, but with our relation to God, and springs from an intellectually true view of that relation’ (Illingworth, *Christian Character*, 1905, p. 27), yet its importance in regulating men’s ordinary conduct and intercourse did not escape Christ’s notice. His striking lessons on this subject were called for at the time, and are far from being exhausted, for it is still true that ‘the really humble man is as great in the moral world as he is rare’ (Bruce, *Expos. Gr. Test.* on [Mat 18:4](#)).

(a) *The child, the unconscious type of humility* ([Mat 18:1-4](#), [Mar 9:33-37](#)).—This was Christ’s object-lesson on the question that caused frequent heartburning among the disciples, ‘Who then is greatest?’ etc. Their assimilation of their Master’s mind proceeded slowly. As He went on absorbed in the thought of His approaching cross, His followers walked behind and stirred each other’s worst passions by raising questions of place and precedence. At their next interview the Master of men set a child in the

midst of His disciples, and shamed them out of their unworthy temper. This is our Lord's rebuke of pride, rivalry, and ambition in their thousand forms, His reversal of our ordinary and selfish ideas of greatness, and His warning against the world's spirit of exclusiveness, intolerance, and class distinctions. The truly great is he who considers the claims of others and is slow to give offence ([Mat 18:6](#)), and who on all occasions appears simple, teachable, unpretending, indifferent to questions of rank and superiority, and willing to humble himself 'as this little child.' It is only the childlike heart that is capable of knowing God ([Mat 11:25](#)), and of finding the way into His kingdom. This image has stamped itself on the mind of Christendom, and this pattern of greatness is still fresh. Human character is once for all taught to mould itself after this original and lovely type. Christ first saw the hateful and unworkableness of a world without a child!

(b) The servant, the practical example of humility ([Mat 20:20-28](#); [Mat 23:1-12](#), [Mar 10:35-45](#), [Luk 22:24-27](#), [Joh 13:1-17](#)).—This ideal of service was presented on two distinct occasions: the one when the sons of Zebedee came forward with their request for the leading places in the Kingdom; and the other when the same love of dignity, and the jealous exclusion of each other's claims, gave rise to the strife that marred the Last Supper. In rebuking this spirit, Christ had in view not merely the mistaken tendencies of His disciples, who were already fired by the promise of individual 'thrones' ([Luk 22:30](#)) dear to the Israelitish imagination, but also the popular and prevailing standards of the time. The rulers of the Gentiles aimed at supremacy, and, in the exercise of a harsh authority, delighted to 'lord it over them'; and equally the scribes and Pharisees, in their fondness for places and titles of honour, coveted influence and recognition as the 'great ones' of Jewish society. Christ required a new standard and line of conduct from His followers. 'Not so shall it be among you.' Henceforth, greatness lies in conformity to a higher than the heathen or Jewish type: 'but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister,' etc. The principle of this law is not impersonal, but personal; the seat of authority in the Christian religion and in Christian morals is Christ: 'even as the Son of Man came,' etc. ([Mat 20:28](#)). Finally, in one concrete act, Christ gave an illustration of the great principle He enunciated, when, at the Passover meal, He rose and 'took a towel and girded himself,' and washed the disciples' feet. This astonishing incident left an ineffaceable impression ([1Pe 5:5](#)), and warranted the literal saying: 'I am in the midst of you as he that serveth' ([Luk 22:27](#)). Such an ideal and example of service have slowly effected a revolution in the moral sentiment and practice of mankind. We may add, if Christ's setting forth of the child was evidence of His originality

as a teacher, the substitution of the servant for the ruler was a no less striking proof of the uniqueness of His insight and methods.

‘It is one of the achievements of Jesus that He introduced into the world a new ideal of greatness, such an ideal as men had never dreamed of’ (D. Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, 1905, p. 442. Cf. Herrmann in art. below: ‘Im NT ist ohne Zweifel der Eindruck wiedergegeben dass Jesus in dieser Beziehung seinen Jüngern etwas völlig Neues gegeben hat’).

Some ideals are too airy and remote to come into touch with actual experience and practice, but Christ’s Law of Service is capable of daily realization, and is within the reach of every one. It is open to all to do some simple deed of kindness, helpfulness, and self-denial, and no action inspired by Christ-like love and humility will pass unnoticed or unrewarded by the gracious Master and great Servant of all ([Mat 25:40](#)).

iv. Characteristics and Relationships.—A few further points of general and practical interest are suggested by this subject, and may be briefly touched on.

1. Humility and character.—In ordinary experience, humility is related to sin and penitence, and marks the feeling of unworthiness in the light of the illimitable moral ideal. In presence of the holy revelation of the Son of God, conscience becomes sensitive, and the sense of guilt, as in the case of Peter ([Luk 5:8](#)), weighs men down. ‘This, however, is not one of the essential conditions of humility, for we know that humility was also an element in Christ’s character’ (Ritschl). The greatness of the Baptist was rooted in his humility and utter freedom from jealousy ([Joh 3:27](#); [Joh 3:30](#)), and this grace has been the soil and safety of saints ever since. Keble treated others with a ‘humbling humility’ (Lock’s *Life*, p. 233. Cf. MacEwen’s *Life of Cairns*, p. 600: ‘The first personal impression that he made on all who met him was one of wonder at his humility’). The child, to which Christ pointed, represents humility as part of the essence and permanence of Christian character, and remains an immortal type, preserving the wonder and bloom of the moral world.

2. Humility and kindred virtues.—No Christian grace is isolated or thrives alone. Humility is ‘part of a great moral whole. Instead of proscribing, it promotes the growth of virtues unlike yet not unfriendly to itself’ (Liddon on ‘Humility and Action’ in *University Sermons*). Thus it is closely connected with *Truth*, for humility or confession that does not rest on the recognition of facts is insincere and worthless. It is inspired by *Love*; ministering love appears always in the guise of humility. *Meekness* rests on humility as its foundation (Trench), and *Patience* expresses along with

humility the practical virtue of the Christian religion, especially called for and tested in the world (Ritschl).

3. Humility and self-consciousness.—It has been the tendency of certain schools of theology and piety to make humility the result of self-contemplation, arrived at by the soul's reaction upon itself. This gives rise to artificial and extreme methods of discipline, and misses the healthy objectivity of the life that forgets self in the consideration and service of others (see Herrmann's art. for vigorous criticism of this tendency and ideal of asceticism, derived from Augustine and Bernard. Cf. Harnack's *History of Dogma* [English translation], vi. p. 10, note). Humility is 'the eye which sees everything except itself' (quoted in Ritschl). Work and the school of life are the best discipline of humility, as of the other virtues.

'We are to respect our responsibilities,' wrote Mr. Gladstone, 'not ourselves. We are to respect the duties of which we are capable, but not our capabilities simply considered. There is to be no complacent self-contemplation, beruminating upon self. When self is viewed, it must always be in the most intimate connexion with its purposes' (Morley's *Life*, i. 214). On the other hand, the externalizing of humility and the danger of parading it in rules and ceremonies that lead to self-humiliation must equally be avoided. Christ and His Apostles discountenanced all needless self-consciousness and show of virtue ([Mat 6:1](#) ff., [Col 2:23](#). Cf. Ritschl: 'Even in ascetic forms of worship there is no particular form of expression necessary to humility').

4. Humility and individuality.—This virtue is not to be cultivated to the neglect of manliness or at the expense of loyalty to religious and moral principle ([Mat 10:32](#)). Christ honours the spirit of energy and enterprise in us, and blames the hiding of our talents and the misuse of our opportunities through diffidence or cowardice ([Mat 25:14](#) ff.). The manly and energetic character of the centurion, as shown in his faith, was doubtless as pleasing to Jesus as the soldier's reverence and humbleness of address ([Luk 7:6](#)). Humility or the fear of God should banish all unworthy fear. Christ's unflinching exposure of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23) calls us to be courageous in adherence to truth and righteousness, and in view of evil and opposition, however powerful. It was a wholesome saying of the Rabbis: 'The disciple of the wise should have sufficient pride to stand in defence of the Law he represents.' Self-assertion has therefore its legitimate sphere, and the 'salt' of individuality in religion and in society should in nowise be lost. There is the danger, however, of exaggerating our own view and importance: 'it always needs much grace to see what other people are, and to keep a sense of moral proportion' (Denney, *Expos. Gr. Test.* on [Rom](#)

12:3). In the adaptation of the Christian Church to society, and to reconcile conflicting interests, it requires humility 'to adjust men in due order for the purposes of life' (T. B. Strong's *Christian Ethics*, Bampton Lect. 1895, p. 127).

5. *Humility and science*.—Christ's interview with Nicodemus teaches that the assumption of knowledge ('we know,' [Joh 3:2](#)) may cover only ignorance and confusion. The 'wise and understanding' ([Mat 11:25](#)) receive no new light: self-satisfied pride and prejudice are the foes of spiritual enlightenment and intellectual advance. The true student and investigator of nature must still feel, like Newton, that, notwithstanding his progress and attainments, the great ocean of truth lies undiscovered before him. Docility, not dogmatism, is the mark of the inquirer, and the means of intellectual development. In this important and ever-changing region of science, R. H. Hutton has well observed that humility 'means the docility of learners towards a teacher infinitely above them,' and that it requires wisdom to see the true relations between different kinds of knowledge, and to keep physical knowledge from being turned to a false and dangerous use in the sphere of moral truth. Here also the master of truth and knowledge must take the place of a servant, and illustrate his greatness by his humility—'and science is humble only when it uses its knowledge and its ignorance alike to help other men and not to lord it over them' (Essay on 'The Humility of Science' in *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, 1901). So manifold is the function of this indispensable and crowning grace. Literature.—Besides works above named, Grimm-Thayer's *Lex.*; Moulton-Geden's *Concord. to Greek Test.*; art. 'Humility in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible vol. ii.; Herrmann in *PRE*^E [Note: RE Real-Encyklopädie für protest. Theologie und Kirche.] 3 [Note: designates the particular edition of the work referred] ('Demut, Demutig'—an art. characteristic in its Ritschlian standpoint and criticism); E. Schreiber, art. in *Jewish Encyc.* 1904 (interesting and suggestive); B. Weiss, *Bib. Theol. of NT*, pp. 116, 117, and Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justif. and Reconcil.* ch. ix. § 65 (both in Clark's translation); A. B. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, chs. xiv. xxi.; Professor J. Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles*⁴ [Note: designates the particular edition of the work referred], p. 264; Rothe, *Sermons* ('The Humility of the Lord'—Clark's translation); Liddon, *Some Words of Christ* ('True Greatness'); Church, *Cathed. and Univ. Sermons* ('the Condescension of our Lord'); Dante, *Purgatory*, Cantos 10–12; R. Browning's exquisite little poem, 'Humility' (*Asolando*); Kip. ling's *Recessional*.

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