

# The Concept of Humility according to St. Isaac the Syrian: Adoption, Perfection, and Repentance

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## Deskripsi

This article is a research project in the field of theology that explores the virtue of humility, as advocated by the Old Testament prophets and Jesus in the New Testament. It argues that humility is not merely a commendable personal quality, but can be experienced as a profound spiritual state.

## Sitasi

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## Abstract

*The virtue of humility, as espoused by both Old Testament prophets and Jesus in the New Testament, is not merely a commendable personal quality; rather, it can be experienced as a profound spiritual state. St. Isaac the Syrian articulates three key concepts of humility that elucidate its connection to spiritual experience, which are applicable to both laypersons and church leaders. Firstly, humility enables the individual to be adopted by God as His child, thereby suggesting that humans, through humility, can participate in the divine nature when united with God in eternity. Secondly, humility functions as a conduit for the perfection of the soul. Those who achieve spiritual perfection do so through the virtue of humility, which shapes their attitude towards worldly pleasures and desires, aligning them more closely with the love of God and the pursuit of eternal values. Finally, humility is a crucial element in the process of repentance. Genuine repentance, characterised by the acknowledgement and remorse of one's sins, is grounded in humility. This humility cultivates a profound sense of gratitude for God's grace and mercy, enabling individuals to recognise their vulnerabilities and seek divine guidance. Consequently, humility not only facilitates personal spiritual growth but also reinforces one's relationship with God.*

**Keywords:** *humility; children of God; soul perfection; repentance; spiritual*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of humility is a well-established one within the field of human life, with a substantial body of research and literature attesting to its significance. The concept of humility has considerable depth and relevance in the context of spirituality and leadership. Nevertheless, in contemporary society, humility is frequently misconstrued as a sign of weakness or disadvantage. A significant proportion of the population is unable to comprehend this concept in its proper context. In particular, within the context of ecclesiastical leadership, humility is frequently perceived as a mere moral virtue, rather than as a pathway to profound spiritual insight.

Consequently, an attitude of superiority and a lack of humility may impede the enhancement of the quality of ministry. In accordance with the Indonesian National Dictionary (KBBI), the term "humility" is defined as not being arrogant or haughty. This definition highlights the importance of a humble disposition as the antithesis of pride and arrogance, which frequently impede interpersonal and spiritual connections. In the context of the Bible, the concept of humility is imbued with a deeper and richer meaning than is commonly perceived. One of the most significant verses on the subject of humility is 1 Peter 5:5, which states, "God opposes the proud, but has mercy on the humble." This verse not only corroborates the idea that humility is a desirable attitude for God, but also elucidates the consequences of pride and arrogance. Those who are characterised by pride will be opposed by God, whereas those who are humble will receive His favour. In the Bible, humility is frequently linked to submission and obedience to God's will. This indicates that those who are humble are aware of their shortcomings and dependency on a higher power, and are therefore open to learning and adapting their actions in accordance with this guidance.

In the context of ecclesiastical leadership, humility is of particular importance, as it enables leaders to be more receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and better able to serve the congregation with love and understanding. Furthermore, humility is regarded as a conduit to more profound spiritual experiences. The act of setting aside one's ego and pride allows for a greater capacity to perceive the presence of a higher power and to undergo a spiritual transformation. It can therefore be argued that humility is not only a moral value, but also an important foundation in spiritual life and ministry. Humility is a fundamental tenet of ministry, as Christian leadership is not primarily concerned with the trappings of position or office. Instead, it is grounded in the values of service and care for others (Siahaya, 2019, p. 7). By demonstrating humble servant leadership, Elijah became one of the most powerful and significant prophets in history. Nevertheless, he remained humble and continued to maintain his relationship with God (Siahaya, 2019). The principle of humility was also evident in Joshua. With his humble attitude, Joshua was willing to be moulded into a leader and exercised his leadership reliably (Sinaga & Tambunan, 2021). Apart from the prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New Testament is also an exemplar of humility, as evidenced by His act of washing the disciples' feet (John 13:5). These examples demonstrate that success in leading or serving is largely determined by the attitude of the heart when carrying it out.

Other studies posit that humility is a term that denotes an individual's inherent moral character. Tambunan posits that humility is an awareness of one's limitations, which precludes the display of arrogance (Tambunan, 2018). Nevertheless, it is evident that in the contemporary era, a considerable proportion of the population lacks an accurate understanding of the concept of humility. Consequently, it is often perceived as a mere moral value, with the primary objective being to facilitate a harmonious social existence.

In contrast with the prevailing opinion, St. Isaac, one of the Church Fathers, considers humility not only to be a matter of morality but also a spiritual aspect of one's life. He posits that humility is a means of fostering a closer relationship with God, thereby indicating that humility is a deeply personal spiritual experience (Alfeyev, 2000, p. 112). St. Isaac the Syrian

posits that a solitary existence represents a form of renunciation from the world. This silence is not merely a means of avoiding physical crowds; it also entails the sanctification of the heart and mind. In the view of St. Isaac, humility serves as a means of fostering a closer relationship with God, representing a deeply personal spiritual experience. In discussing the sanctification of the heart and mind, St. Isaac emphasised that humility is the foundation of the monastic life that leads to God (*Theosis*). Silence in the mind and heart gives rise to prayer and the act of sanctification itself. In other words, humility is not solely a matter of morality; it is also a spiritual dimension that facilitates a personal relationship with God.

The relationship between humility and spiritual experience remains largely unacknowledged by the general public. In the context of modern life, humility is often perceived as a quality associated with vulnerability and loss. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly uncommon, particularly among those in positions of leadership (Tambunan, 2018). Even in the present era, within the context of ecclesiastical leadership, there remains a prevalent perception that humility is solely concerned with matters of morality. This perspective has led to the development of a seniority-based approach within the church, which has become a significant obstacle to the advancement of quality ministry (Saragi et al., 2022). In addressing this challenge, an understanding of humility as elucidated by St. Isaac the Syrian can serve as a foundation for individuals to navigate the complexities of social life while maintaining a spiritual perspective. The following article will therefore examine the concept of humility as defined by St. Isaac the Syrian and consider how this concept can be used as a basis for a person in living a spiritual life in the midst of social life.

## METHOD

This research employs a literature study methodology, whereby data is sought through an examination of the writings of St. Isaac the Syrian. Furthermore, the author will draw upon the perspectives of other Church Fathers and pertinent secondary sources to enrich and refine this discourse.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

St. Isaac the Syrian, also known as Isaac of Nineveh, was born in Beth Qatraye, Eastern Arabia, a region that includes parts of modern-day Qatar. The region was multilingual, with speakers of Syriac and Arabic, and situated in a strategic location, facilitating the interaction between Mesopotamian and northeastern Arabian cultures. St. Isaac was reared in an environment characterised by cultural and religious diversity, encompassing a rich tapestry of traditions. The early Christian communities in this region were distinguished by their profound spirituality, ascetic practices, and unwavering commitment to the teachings of Christ. From an early age, Isaac displayed a pronounced inclination towards spirituality. The monastic traditions of the region, which were shaped by the teachings of the desert fathers of Egypt and the practices of early Christian communities in Mesopotamia, had a profound impact on his spiritual outlook. Isaac's decision to join the monastery was influenced by his spiritual

upbringing and the accounts of the desert fathers. He then proceeded to undergo a novitiate period, during which he was instructed in ascetic practices such as fasting, vigils, and prolonged prayer. His monastic life included communal prayers, shared meals, and collective labour, which served to reinforce the idea of a supportive spiritual community. Isaac was celebrated for his profound spiritual insights, which earned him considerable esteem within the monastic community. His treatises on Christian asceticism, informed by his own experiences as a monk, emphasise the purification of the heart and mind as a means of encountering God. One of the important subjects in his profound spiritual insights is humility.

Humility is a character trait that is widely regarded as a positive quality. Humility encourages individuals to eschew egocentrism and adopt a self-effacing, servant-like disposition. In essence, the characteristics of a humble person can be observed in their demeanor, which is not characterized by arrogance or haughtiness. In his book, Robert posits that humility is not about a person with a certain physical attribute attempting to convince themselves that they are not that attribute, nor is it about a person with a certain level of intelligence attempting to convince themselves that they are not intelligent. Rather, it is about forgetting oneself (Herman, 2000, p. 174). From this, it can be deduced that humility is an effective method for combating selfishness. In the context of social interaction, humility is a crucial attitude for individuals to cultivate. What are the reasons for the importance of humility for all individuals? Furthermore, humility serves as a foundation for both moral character and the establishment and preservation of interpersonal connections. An individual who exhibits commendable character and is adept at fostering positive relationships with others is more likely to be accepted by society and to thrive socially. It is therefore important for all individuals to be mindful of their underlying attitudes, as these shape their subsequent actions.

In addition to its significance in social life, humility also plays a pivotal role in spiritual life. The concept of humility is inextricably linked to the concept of God. In his book, St. Isaac writes that to speak of humility (*mukkaka or makkikuta*) is to speak of God, as God in his vision is primarily the One who is 'meek and lowly in heart'. The humility of God was made manifest to the world in the Incarnation of the Word. In the Old Testament, God was perceived as an invisible and inaccessible entity by those who sought to engage with him. "However, when he assumed a form of humility and concealed his glory beneath human flesh, he became both visible and attainable" (Alfeyev, 2000). God, who was previously invisible and inaccessible to those who approached him, became visible and accessible as a result of his decision to clothe himself in humility and hide his glory beneath human form. This demonstrates that God's humility was manifested through the mystery of Christ's incarnation, and it is through this humility that all humanity can attain a relationship with God.

Jesus is the Son of God who became incarnate as a human being and lived his life in service to others. The term "servant" as used in relation to Jesus does not imply any lack of quality or inferiority. Hendi posits that the term "servant" as used in reference to Jesus does not signify a loss of divinity or an indication of weakness or limitations on the part of Jesus. Rather, it is an expression of humility in the context of Jesus' service to humanity, exemplified by his ultimate act of sacrifice in offering his life as a ransom for many (Hendi, 2017). Despite

the necessity for Jesus to serve faithfully and obediently, live among humankind, and ultimately die on the cross to save humankind, his divinity and majesty as God will never be lost. In the course of fulfilling His mission in the world, Jesus assumed the role of a servant leader.

It is incumbent upon every Christian to emulate the humility of Christ. St. Isaac posits that the attainment of humility necessitates the internalisation of Christ's essence, as those who embody humility will be transformed into His likeness (Alfeyev, 2000). This demonstrates that humility is the means by which one may attain the ultimate objective of human existence, namely, to become like God in eternity. Humility reflects divine things, and thus those who embody humility will be held in high regard by their peers. Consequently, humility plays an indirect role in the restoration of fraternal love within the context of human life. Humility plays a multifaceted role in human life, including the capacity to facilitate salvation. In the words of Syncletica, "Just as one cannot construct a ship without nails, so one cannot be saved without humility." (Hendi, 2022, p. 361).

### **Humility: Access to Becoming Children of God**

Humility is a prerequisite for access to the divine. This is due to the fact that God Himself demonstrated humility when He took on human form, thereby establishing a positive relationship with humanity. In this context, St. Isaac posits that humility enables individuals to be perceived by God as His children, given that they become analogous to His Son, Jesus Christ. St. Isaac refers to this phenomenon as 'adoption' and 'assimilation with God' (Hendi, 2022). The terms "adoption" and "assimilation," as employed by St. Isaac, signify that human beings are adopted by God as His children, who will partake of the Divine nature when united with God in eternity.

This process of adoption and assimilation does not occur as a result of human endeavour, whether spiritual or physical. Rather, it is the result of humility alone. Additionally, St. Isaac underscored that while diligence in spiritual training is commendable, it is insufficient in itself. He asserted that humility, in isolation from asceticism or spiritual training, is insufficient for attaining divine adoption (Alfeyev, 2000). This illustrates the significant role that humility plays in human existence. The question thus arises as to why this is so. Humility is the sole means by which humans may be adopted by God and become His children.

Once an individual has been adopted into the divine family, there are numerous obligations that must be fulfilled. Firstly, it is incumbent upon every child of God or believer to pursue the purification of their soul. In 1 John 3:3, it is stated that, in accordance with the holiness of Christ, humanity must also pursue the purification of the self, in alignment with the holiness of Christ. Christ is the image and likeness of God (Colossians 1:15; Philippians 2:6), and thus, human beings, created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26), should purify themselves in accordance with the example set by Christ. This is because the ultimate goal of human life is to become like Christ (1 John 3:2). The process of purification entails the rejection of all malevolent desires, a life of asceticism, and the maintenance of inner vigilance. This process can only be accomplished if there is already a divine seed present within the individual,

which is the result of the union between faith and the love of God in the heart, facilitated by the Holy Spirit (Wijaya, 2019, p. 95). It is therefore necessary to have faith in Christ as a prerequisite to undergoing the process of purification.

Secondly, every child of God must live in truth. Living in truth here means living according to God's Word (1 Jn 2:5) and not breaking His commandments or laws (1 Jn 3:4, 7, 8). Doing righteousness should also be the mark of God's children (1 Jn 3:10) because God is righteousness itself. Therefore, those who are in God should love righteousness and hate sin. On the other hand, anyone who constantly sins is a sign of the children of Satan, because they come from Satan who constantly sins from the beginning (Hendi, 2019, p. 126). Thus, children of God must always demonstrate righteous living without being enslaved by sin.

Thirdly, every child of God must live in love. Why is this so? Because God Himself is love, so whoever lives in God must live in love. Living in love is God's greatest commandment, as it says in Mark 12:30 that everyone should love God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, and with all their strength, and love their neighbour as themselves. In 1 John 4:20-21 it is also explained that the person who says he loves God but in real life hates his brother is called a liar, because he cannot love the invisible God if he does not love the visible, let alone the invisible God. This shows that love is the bridge for us to connect with God and with others.

The three things that children of God must do will not happen without humility. Humility makes one submissive and sincere in doing everything. With humility, God's children can purify themselves, live in righteousness, and even live in love, because humility itself is basically an inner quality within a person. This inner quality consists of trust in God and the presence of the Holy Spirit hidden in the depths of the heart (Alfeyev, 2000). That is why people who possess humility will easily attain a life of righteousness and love, and gain access to becoming children of God.

### **Humility: Access to Perfection of the Soul**

It is a common aspiration for individuals to strive for perfection in various aspects of their lives. Nevertheless, it is an irrefutable fact that the path to perfection is a lengthy one. In this context, saints have been exemplary in their pursuit of spiritual perfection. St. Isaac posits that humility is a prerequisite for attaining the level of perfection (Alfeyev, 2000). Throughout their lives, these saints maintained a sense of humility, adhering to the belief that such an attitude could facilitate the attainment of spiritual perfection. Accordingly, in their quest for spiritual perfection, the saints led a reclusive existence and engaged in various ascetic practices or spiritual disciplines.

The initial step undertaken by the saints in their pursuit of spiritual perfection was to adopt a solitary lifestyle. The term "solitary life" as used in this context denotes a mode of existence characterised by solitude and a reliance on God as the primary source of assistance and protection. In relation to the concept of solitude, St. Isaac posits that it can be defined as "the internal experience of living within oneself, of withdrawing into one's inner person – a necessary action for uniting oneself with God." Concurrently, it is the experience of renouncing

the 'other', even a friend or a relative. "Ultimately, it is an act of withdrawal from the world and a rejection of its trappings, undertaken with the intention of achieving union with God." (Alfeyev, 2000). Consequently, the solitary life led by the saints represents an act of humility, undertaken with the objective of attaining a state of complete fulfilment in God. This is because the individual must achieve a state of oneness with the divine, which can only be attained through the process of self-realisation. From this, it can be deduced that the act of living alone entails the withdrawal from the world and the passions that inhabit it, in order to allow for the presence of God's love to take its place.

In their pursuit of a solitary existence, the saints consistently strove to uphold humility, as it was this quality that enabled them to navigate the challenges inherent in such a lifestyle. In the view of St. Isaac, individuals who possess humility are those who evince faith, hope, and a disposition that is in harmony with the Holy Spirit. Consequently, this inner state of humility manifests itself in outward forms, such as attire, speech, respect for others, avoidance of honour, and even resistance to various forms of trials (Alfeyev, 2000). Accordingly, in their endeavours to withdraw from the world and its allurements, the saints persist in upholding humility as a tenet to preserve the purity of the inner self and to disseminate it externally, thereby establishing a connection between the inner and the outer realms.

In addition to leading a solitary life, saints engage in a range of ascetic practices or spiritual exercises. Asceticism can be defined as an effort to train one's body, mind, and soul so that one can present one's body as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). Asceticism facilitates the realisation that spiritual piety is insufficient for salvation; rather, it is the grace of God that is necessary (Hendi, 2017). This unceasing asceticism does not engender pride or self-aggrandizement; rather, it fosters humility, enabling the realization that one's own self is diminishing in comparison to the divine (John 3:30).

One common form of asceticism practised by the saints is silent prayer. St. Isaac posited that silent and humble prayer facilitates access to the mystical depths of divine contemplation. Such a quality of humility is not achieved through one's own efforts, but rather through a process of self-humbling before God, which facilitates an encounter with the divine in the form of silent prayer (Alfeyev, 2000). Subsequent to this encounter, one may approach God in silence, without even considering oneself worthy to utter words of prayer before the One who is above all words. From this, it can be concluded that silent and humble prayer unites the individual with the divine.

Prayer and humility are inextricably linked. St. Isaac asserts that prayer is a prerequisite for attaining humility, as there is no alternative means of achieving this state without petitioning God through prayer or through human agency alone. It is therefore incumbent upon all to recognise their own shortcomings and to call upon God for assistance through prayer (Alfeyev, 2000). As the apostle Paul observed, it is in weakness that the power of God is made perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Humility is characterised by a certain degree of silence. Silence, whether cultivated through a solitary lifestyle or as a result of asceticism stemming from humility, can facilitate the development of a mature disposition in one's interactions with all situations. This enables

them to avoid acting rashly or emotionally, and instead to maintain composure and calm (Alfeyev, 2000). It can thus be posited that those who succeed in attaining true silence are able to readily master themselves. Therefore, the saints endeavour to live in silence in order to achieve self-mastery in all aspects of their lives.

In addition to engendering silence, humility also gives rise to *diacrisis* or sensitivity of conscience. St. Isaac posits that the persistent admonishments of the conscience are indicative of humility. The absence of these factors in any undertaking is indicative of a hardened heart. It suggests that an individual is inclined to self-justification, attributing blame to others or, more egregiously, ascribing culpability to the benevolent providence of God. Conversely, an individual cannot depart from the confines of humility unless they first perceive themselves as being devoid of culpability, attributing responsibility instead to the circumstances and opportunities that have been bestowed upon them by God (Alfeyev, 2000). The capacity for trained *diacrisis* or sensitivity of conscience is a defining characteristic of a person of good character. Conversely, a lack of conscience results in a hardened heart, as the individual becomes accustomed to self-righteousness and the easy blame of others, including God. Those who do not utilise the *diacrisis* bestowed by God are susceptible to the allure of worldly temptations, including pride and complacency. It is therefore crucial for every believer to engage in the practice of *diacrisis*, or the sensitivity of the heart that arises from humility.

Those who are humble are more familiar with God and less alienated from the world. This represents the objective of all the endeavours of the saints, which is to reach the level of perfection of the soul. St. Isaac posits that those who have attained perfection are those who have attained humility, which is evidenced by their attitude towards the world. Such individuals consider the act of pleasing and submitting to the world and all its desires to be an abomination (Alfeyev, 2000). Consequently, their attention is no longer directed towards temporal matters, but rather towards those of an eternal nature. It can therefore be argued that humility is a prerequisite for attaining spiritual perfection, which in turn will lead to a greater capacity for love, both for God and for one's neighbour.

### **Humility: Access to Repentance**

The quality of humility is a product of a heart that is in awe of the divine. St. Isaac asserts that the fear of God compels one to seek refuge in God's grace with a contrite heart, seeking absolution for one's sins (Alfeyev, 2000). Such humble submission to God ultimately facilitates the establishment of a unique and intimate relationship with the divine, as it renounces the reliance on self-defense and instead places unwavering trust in the ever-sustaining presence of God. Similarly, as the apostle Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 12:9, he sought to take pride in his weaknesses so that the power of Christ might be manifested through him. It can thus be concluded that the submission to God's power in a humble manner is conducive to the process of complete repentance.

An individual characterised by humility may be considered to exemplify the image of a child. In Matthew 18:3, it is written that unless one repents and becomes as a child, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. In this context, St. Isaac offered an interpretation of the



verse, stating that the humble person is akin to a child. This is because, for the sake of God, the humble person exhibits the simplicity and innocence characteristic of a child (Alfeyev, 2000). This illustrates that the vulnerability of young children (those who are humble) compels God to provide them with particular care and protection.

It is often difficult for people to repent without humility. This is because true repentance must be based on humility, as repentance itself is an unceasing supplication through prayer filled with contrition. Humility makes a person aware of their wrongdoings, which then gives rise to remorse (Alfeyev, 2000). Prayer filled with contrition and humility brings one closer to God, allowing them to seek forgiveness for past transgressions and ask for protection for the future.

Genuine repentance is initiated by a process of lamentation and mourning over one's transgressions. In the words of Evagrius, a prominent figure in the history of the Church, it would be prudent for an individual to continually reflect on their transgressions with a sense of remorse and contemplate the potential consequences of their actions until such a time as they undergo a genuine transformation through repentance (Sherrard & Ware, 1979, p. 70). It is of great importance for all individuals to engage in acts of lamentation and weeping over their sins, as the perpetuation of sin will inevitably result in death. In the opinion of St. Isaac, the realisation of one's own sin is of greater importance than the performance of miracles or the experience of supernatural mystical visions. This is because it marks the beginning of the path of repentance. It is therefore incumbent upon every believer to endeavour to realise, remember and lament sins on a daily basis, in order that the heart may be cleansed and the nous or inner eye re-illuminated, which has been damaged by the pollution of sin.

Repentance represents a crucial aspect of spiritual renewal, facilitating the attainment of Christ-like perfection. In the words of St. Isaiah the Solitary, one of the authors of the *Philokalia*, repentance is "attentiveness to oneself, so that nothing destructive can separate one from the love of God." It is imperative to safeguard one's heart and not become complacent, reasoning that one is a sinner and therefore unable to protect it. "When a person forsakes their sins and returns to God, their repentance serves to regenerate and renew them entirely." The words of St. Isaiah the Solitary on repentance are identical to those of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:38-39, which state, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Consequently, repentance effectively regenerates and renews an individual when they genuinely forsake their sins and return to God. This process enables them to become a spiritually mature individual who continues to evolve towards Christ-like perfection (Hendi, 2018).

The act of repentance facilitates the process of reconciliation between God and the human person. In the view of St. Isaac, each individual is obliged to repent of their misdeeds in order to reaffirm their commitment to avoid similar transgressions in the future and to maintain a state of prayer before God. The forgiveness that emanates from God serves to reconcile the individual who has repented with the divine, thereby enabling the latter to

participate in the divine love. One's confidence in the existence of this forgiveness is derived from a belief in God's mercy that transcends His justice, particularly in light of the Incarnation, which represents the promise of reconciliation between God and humanity.

It is only through repentance that is born from the heart that one can earn God's mercy. St. Theognostos posits that it is solely through repentance that one can receive God's mercy and avoid His wrath. This is because God is not displeased with humanity for committing evil, but rather with the act itself (Palmer et al., 1984, p. 22). The commission of a crime does not immediately result in punishment, as humanity is inherently fickle and unstable. However, those who have sinned and do not repent or turn from their evil ways to God will experience consequences. Those who repent humbly are granted mercy by God, who is not a punitive figure but a healer. It is therefore crucial for all believers to persist in the practice of repentance, as divine mercy is accessible to those who repent and seek forgiveness with sincerity.

In addition to attaining divine mercy, contrition and penitence before the Almighty constitute an indispensable pathway to human salvation. In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, it is written that God did not create humanity for the purpose of punishing them, but rather for their salvation. Despite humanity's fall from grace, God remained present in the form of incarnation, with the intention of liberating humankind from the bondage of sin. It is therefore imperative that, when experiencing periods of transgression, individuals must seek forgiveness from God and express remorse, as Proverbs 24:16 states that those who fall must also rise again. The salvation bestowed upon all by God will not be forfeited when they persevere in a life of repentance without capitulating to their adversary.

The continuous practice of repentance with humility before God will inevitably result in the manifestation of the fruits of repentance. The consequence of repentance is the attainment of holiness and purity of life, as elucidated by Gregory Palamas. Given that the Logos of God has bestowed upon humanity the kingdom of heaven, it is imperative that we do not alienate ourselves from this grace by leading an unrepentant existence. It would be more prudent to avoid the company of those who are mired in a state of spiritual darkness and despair. It is incumbent upon us to cultivate the fruits of repentance, which include a humble disposition, compunction, and spiritual grief; a gentle and merciful heart that loves righteousness and pursues purity; peaceful, peace-making, patient in toil, glad to endure persecution, loss, outrage, slander, and suffering for the sake of truth and righteousness. The kingdom of heaven, or more accurately, the King of heaven, is ineffable in His generosity and is present within us (cf. Luke 17:21) (Ware, n.d., p. 373). It is therefore incumbent upon us to cleave to Him through acts of repentance and patient endurance, loving as much as we can Him who has loved us dearly. Consequently, an individual who lives a repentant life will continue to undergo sanctification and purification, as repentance assists in the dissolution of all forms of carnal desires and malevolent passions that could otherwise lead to sinful actions. The consequence of repentance is an intensified love of God and a hatred of sin.

## CONCLUSION

The word humility is one that we are all familiar with. It is a quality that is highlighted by both the prophets who lived in the Old Testament era and Jesus when He lived on earth in the New Testament era, as recorded in the Bible. In addition to being a commendable personal quality, humility can also be experienced as a spiritual state of being. St. Isaac the Syrian offers three concepts of humility that suggest a connection between humility and spiritual experience, regardless of whether a person is a layperson or a leader in the church. One such concept is that humility makes a person adopted by God to be His children. The word 'adoption' suggests that human beings may be considered as being adopted by God as His children, with the potential to share in the divine nature when united with God in eternity.

The second concept of humility, as outlined by St. Isaac the Syrian, is that humility can serve as a pathway to the perfection of the soul. Those who have reached perfection have done so through humility. This is reflected in their attitude towards the world, as they consider the pursuit of worldly pleasures and submission to its desires to be incompatible with their spiritual journey. Those who live humbly will naturally gravitate towards a love of God and a desire to avoid the distractions of worldly desires, which can be fleeting. They will seek to emulate the example of Christ, who reached a state of perfection, and will therefore try to remove anything that might impede their path to achieving that same level of fulfilment.

St. Isaac also suggests that humility can be a pathway to repentance. It is thought that repentance will only happen when a person truly realises and regrets all the evil deeds they have done, humbly before God. It can be challenging to embark on the path of repentance without a foundation of humility. Repentance begins with a heartfelt recognition of one's shortcomings and a deep sense of gratitude for God's grace and mercy. When a person acknowledges their vulnerability and their constant need for divine guidance, it is an act of humility. This divine mercy is always there for those who are willing to turn to Him with a sincere and repentant heart.

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