

spicuous, is to be pitied.

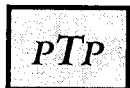
“Beware of too sublime a sense --
Of your own worth and consequence.
The man who deems himself so great,
And his importance of such weight
That all around and all that’s done,
Must move and act through him alone,
Will learn by deep humiliation

“The folly of self-exaltation.” Is my object Christ? or is it self? Do I desire to exalt Christ in order to exalt myself? If Diotrephes withheld the letter of the aged and only living apostle and spoke abusively of him, this second letter must have been to him most unwelcome. It did commend Gaius and Demetrius for not being so lacking in “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

“Truth does not hurt unless it should.”

A. C. Brown

{It should be added that there are those in whom ambitious self is not judged but who do not have the ability to gain an ascendancy; nevertheless, they put themselves forward regarding activities for which they are not qualified spiritually. This may be seen, for example, in pretension to ministry of the Word without the requisite gift. In another area, it may manifest itself in seeking to guide the saints, or exercise oversight, without the qualifications.}



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Ambitious Self

“loves to have the first place.”

“I wrote something to the assembly; but Diotrephes, who loves to have the first place among them, receives us not. For this reason, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, babbling against us with wicked words; and not content with these, neither does he himself receive the brethren; and those who would he prevents and casts them out of the assembly. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil” (3 John 9-11, J. N. D. transl.). What a character! and how many have imitated him, to some degree.

“Ye shall be as gods” was believed by the parents of the human race. As the result ambition was instilled in man to exalt himself these six thousand years. Soon in its most advanced form the antichrist will “exalt himself above all that is called God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Diotrephes and his imitators are not without many warnings in the word of God. Go back to the Old Testament:

Abimelech was so determined to rule that he enlisted all his uncles to electioneer for him; he hired followers, slew seventy of his brethren and reigned three years. He thrust out another aspirant, slew his followers, then their city and burned a thousand men and women in the hold of Shechem. a woman crushed his skull (Judges 9).

Absolom, so much admired, slew his brother, set Joab’s field on fire, then prepared chariots and fifty men to run before him and said, “Oh that I were made judge in land” and then stole the hearts of many by kissing them, after which he set his throne in Hebron in defiance of King David. Absalom also

reared for himself a monument. Hanging was his end. 2 Sam. 14, 15, 18.

Adonijah exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." Again he said, "the kingdom was mine, and all Israel set their faces on me that I should reign," in defiance of King Solomon. He too was slain (1 Kings 1 and 2).

Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jer. 45:5).

"They had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:34). "Love the chief place . . . and the first seats (Matt 23:6, N. T.). "Put thyself down in the last place" (Luke 14:10, N.T.). "Whosoever exalthe himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

As to honor each taking the lead in paying it to the other" (Rom. 12:10. N. T.).

In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

"Content to be little" (J. N. D.). "Little in thine own sight" (1 Sam. 15:17).

"Neither as lording it over God's heritage" (1 Pet. 5:3). (Note) May God forbid us encouraging in any way insubjection to elders and "to one another," as this too is a constant danger.

But just try to reach the conscience of a Diotrephes or try to rebuke him and you will in all probability discover a stout combatant and a clever self-defender. To justify his course of iron rule he may insist that "all things must be done decently and in order"; and also "he that ruleth with diligence" and "let the elders that rule (lit., take the lead) well be counted worthy of double honor." But this rule is the unofficial gift which enables the possessors to "restrain the working of the wills by the word and the Holy Spirit" (J. N. D.). (Instead of "rule" three times in Heb. 13, read "take the lead"). Another favorite scripture resorted to is in Numbers 16 where Dathan and Abiram did wrong in oppos-

ing Moses and Aaron saying, "You take too much upon you . . . wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation?" As types of the Lord, God duly appointed Moses and Aaron to their office but now that all are priests there is no special appointment. The truth itself rebels against those who assume such a place. For that is how clericalism got started in the Church. Ambitious bishops lifted themselves up above the rest, aspiring to be "chief men" among brethren, and this spread into the vast hierarchical system of our day. It displaced the Holy Spirit's office and has thrown the Church into hopeless confusion. May the Lord preserve us from the subtle intrusion of a hierarchy among those gathered to His precious name. "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren."

Worldly and carnal saints are not without blame as they are so apt to rally around their favorite champion, "who loves to have the first place," to run everything and everybody.

Where there is an undercurrent of bitter vying for supremacy, like Saul eying David because he could brook no rival, it is an abomination. It shows the neglect of unsparing self-judgment. The further from any love of prominence, or pretention to official place and dignity, the better.

"It is affected strength that we have to dread and shrink from" (C. H. M.).

"When he was strong his heart was lifted up" (2 Chron. 26:16).

"The advancement of self is the greatest loss" (W. K.).

"The best are those who most know their nothingness" (W. K.).

"If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3).

"Who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me (Gal. 2:6).

It is safer to be a "nobody" than a "somebody." One who takes over the meeting, making self con-