10 Flattery (*Adulacio*)

Gregory[[1]](#endnote-1) says that flattery[[2]](#endnote-2) is the nurse of sins, and the great anger of God, where correction is lacking, and flattery is present. Wherefore, 2 Paralip. 24[:17], flattery attracted king Joas for adoring idols in his old age, who earlier had been of the veneration of God. Again, through flattery king Achab was deceived, 3 Kings 22[:20], for the prophets of Baal did not foretell for him demanding times and deceived him. Therefore, he would not believe what was true of the prophet of God, for which reason he perished in war.

The Philosopher, 7, *De animalibus*,[[3]](#endnote-3) says that bees anointed with oil die. Thus, also those who are anointed with flattery, Psal. [140:5]: “Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.” Whoever softens their minds from the rigor of the truth,[[4]](#endnote-4) as the naturalist say, that when a goat licks an olive tree, it is rendered sterile.[[5]](#endnote-5) Wherefore says Aristotle,[[6]](#endnote-6) that those animals which lap have one lip larger than the other, and a very flexible tongue.

Thus, it is concerning the flatter, Eccli. 5[:11]: “Winnow not with every wind.” The weathercock[[7]](#endnote-7) above the bell tower is moved and tossed to every wind because it has a long tail and an unstable foot, thus those who have a large household in the world and a loose affection. Wherefore, the Apostle says, [Eph. 4:14]: “No more carried about with every wind.” And however, this wind thus refreshes those laboring in honorable and worthy things, because as if they do not feel that they labor beyond their strength. The chameleon is an animal coming from the wind and therefore he is similar in color to anything that one sees, according to Augustine, 11, *De trinitate,* chapter 7.[[8]](#endnote-8) So those who live in the wind of flattery, they are counselors to any person to whom they speak.

Wherefore, Valerius, *De gestis memorialibus*, book 4, chapter 7,[[9]](#endnote-9) the cultivation of happiness raises them up greater on the part of flattery than charity. Therefore, Valerius narrates again, in the same book, chapter 3,[[10]](#endnote-10) that when Aristippus, who was a good friend of Dionysius the tyrant, saw Diogenes the Philosopher washing his vegetables in the city of Syracuse, he said, if you wished to flatter Dionysius, you would not be washing these vegetables. On the contrary, said Diogenes, if you wished to wash these, you would not have to flatter Dionysius. Therefore, Jerome says in some *Epistola,[[11]](#endnote-11)* far be it that the kings of the world should be fawned over by one for whom the daily bread and vile dish of pottage suffices. Wherefore, Eccle. 7[:6-7] says, “It is better to be rebuked by a wise man, than to be deceived by the flattery of fools.” The cause of which, according to that one, “For as the crackling of thorns burning under a pot” caused it to overflow and quickly run out without detection, thus the words of the flatterer.

Again, according to Isidore, 12, *Etymologiae*,[[12]](#endnote-12) although a serpent has but one tongue, however it is so revolving that it seems to have two, thus the flatterer, Prov. 18[:8]: “The words of the double tongued are as if they were harmless, and they reach even to the inner parts of the bowels.” Prov. 8[:13]: “I hate a mouth with a double tongue.” Poison is sweet by necessity, but it quickly kills. Wherefore Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, so that she might die sweetly, drank the poison of the asp.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Thus, flattery is sweetly heard, but it quickly kills. Bede, *Super* *Proverbia*,[[14]](#endnote-14) says, nothing corrupts so quickly as flattery nor so pleasant a wound injures the soul. King David did not spare the Amalekite youth who falsely and flatteringly hoped to obtain for him the crown and bracelet of Saul, 2 Kings 1[:5-10]. Wherefore, Augustine, *Super Psalmum*,[[15]](#endnote-15) there are two kinds of persecutors: the vituperators and the flatterers. But the tongue of the flatterer pursues more than the hand of the killer. Herod Agrippa while he received divine honors from the flatterers, a swelling set upon his head, filling with worms he died, as it is treated in Acts 12[:21-23], and in the *Historia Scolastica*.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Again, flattery is that plague concerning which Exod. 10[:13-15]: “The burning wind raised the locusts over the whole land of Egypt, and the grass of the earth was devoured, and what fruits so ever were on the trees.” Which Gregory explaining, book 13, *Moralia,*[[17]](#endnote-17)says, the locusts are the tongues of the flatterers who injure more than the rest of the plague. Wherefore, Ambrose says in his *Hexameron*,[[18]](#endnote-18) cicadas are not impeded from singing by neither heat, nor by darkness of night.

¶ If, however, one bathed in oil softens and dies, because his passages are then shut up, and he cannot draw air, thus the oil of flattery takes away the vigor of virtue,[[19]](#endnote-19) and just as oil, in which a scorpion is inflicted, drowns, and decays, is a remedy against the bite of a scorpion.[[20]](#endnote-20) Thus, if a flatterer is despised and held in contempt, as if he is drowned in his own oil, Prov. 4[:24]: “Remove from you a froward mouth.”

Again, if a scorpion is killed, upon its own wound, which it has fastened on, its own poison is put in and returned to the body, whence it departs.

Concerning flattery, someone has said,[[21]](#endnote-21) He praises strongly whatever you may praise, he changes his mind if you change yours; dissolves in laughter at the things that you laugh at, and weeps tears when you weep. Wherefore, Gregory, in the beginning of his *Registrum*,[[22]](#endnote-22) no one can be a better counsel than he who loves you, but not part of your company. But today that is verified,[[23]](#endnote-23) I love you not for yourself, but you on account of your company. It is a rare faith therefore, etc. Therefore, it is said in the book that is called *Dogma philosophorum*,[[24]](#endnote-24) false friends for counsel bring flattery, and one of all those is a labored, formal speech, which deceives with a smoother tongue.

Wherefore, Jerome, in an *Epistola*,[[25]](#endnote-25) the flatter is the scorpion biting, the spider weaving, the frog jumping, the locust singing. As for the first, Augustine says, in an *Epistola*,[[26]](#endnote-26) the world is more dangerous when it is fawning than when it is annoying.

As for the second, a web made from the guts of a spider is equal, namely, not only for catching a fly, but also birds when they do not apprehend it, so neither do the prudent apprehend the lies of the flatterers.

As for the third, the frog jumps on the ground, but swims in the water, thus the flatterer among true men does not find a hold, but among the loose and soft.

¶ As for the fourth, the locust only sings in summer, in the winter he is silent, so sweetness sings in prosperity, but in adversity it is silent. Concerning the flatterer, Isaiah 3[:12] says, “O my people, they that call you blessed, the same deceive you.”

Wherefore, the flatterer is compared to that one who steals the kittens of the tiger, about whom Aristotle speaks, in the second book, *De animalibus*,[[27]](#endnote-27) and the Author, in *Speculo Naturali*, fifth book.[[28]](#endnote-28) Taking away his offspring, the tiger pursues, but the captor places a glass mirror on the ground, to which the tiger coming and thinking to see its own progeny, extends its teats, and thus it lingers until the thief escapes. Thus, the flatterer, deserving his labors, steals, but deceives the one following through smooth words.

Again, Lev. [2:11]: “Honey is prohibited to be offered in sacrifice,” that is, the sweetness of flattery. Again, Judges 4[:18-21], Jael first gave Sisare milk to drink and afterwards killed him. Again, 2 Kings 20[:9]: “And Joab said to Amasa: God save thee, my brother, but kissing killed him.” Whence Prov. 11[:1]: “A deceitful balance is an abomination,” but flatterers weigh more than or less than the value owed, Psal. [61:10]: “the sons of men are liars in the balances.” Again when a mirror is distorted it makes things to be estimated other than they are,[[29]](#endnote-29) and to be represented otherwise, that is the work of a flatterer.

Adultery (*Adulterium*), see below [27].

Lamb (*Agnus*), see below [13].

Altar (*Altare*), see below [15].

1. Gregory, *Moralia* 4.26.51 (PL 75:662-663): id est, postquam in culpae consuetudinem veni, cur me ad atrociorem nequitiam vel falsae spei fiducia, vel lacte miserae [Col.0663A] desperationis enutrivi? Cum enim culpa in usum venerit, ei jam animus etiam si appetat, debilius resistit; quia quot vicibus pravae frequentationis astringitur, quasi tot vinculis ad mentem ligatur.

Cf. Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio* 2.6 (PL 92.404): Quia ipsa peccati nutrix adulatio; sicut oleum flammis, sic in culpa ardentibus solita ministrare fomentum, maxima est utique poena peccantium.

Cf. Bruno Herbipolensis, *Expositio Psalmorum* Psal. 9:23 (PL 142.73): Et haec est magna ira Dei in impium, ut desit correctio et assit adulatio, adulantium enim linguae alligant animas in peccatis.

Cf. Peter Lombard, *Commentarius in Psalmos*, In finem pro occultis filii, vers. 24 (PL 191.139): Haec est magna ira Dei, ut desit correctio, et adsit adulatio. [Gl. int., Aug., Alcuin.] Adulantium linguae alligant animas in peccatis. [Cassiod. Gl. int.] [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For flattery cf. Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* Chapter 4 (Princeton: University Press, 1986) (pp. 102-108). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 8.27, 605b20-21 (Barnes 1:945): All insects, without exception, die if they be smeared over with oil; and they die all the more rapidly if you smear their head with the oil and lay them out in the sun. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Glossa ordinaria* Psal. 140:5 (PL 113:1063): Dilectio simulata, [Col.1063D] quae mentes a rigore veritatis emollit ad noxia. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 8.76 (LCL 353:142-143): olivam lambendo quoque sterilem faciunt

If a goat licks an olive tree the tree will become barren. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 8.6, 595a8-14 (Barnes, 1:931): Jag-toothed animals drink by lapping, as do also some animals with teeth differently formed, as the mouse. Animals whose upper and lower teeth meet evenly drink by suction, as the horse and the ox; the bear neither laps nor sucks, but gulps down his drink. Birds, a rule, drink by suction, but the long necked birds stop and elevate their heads at intervals; the purple coot is the only one (of the long-necked birds) that swallows water by gulps. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Alexander Neckam, *The Treatise De Utensilibus* in *A Volume of Vocabularies* ed. Thomas Wright (privately printed, 1857), (p. 115): Cheruca tamen proprie dicitur ventilogius, quod in Gallico dicitur *cochet*. [Note: An early Latin-French vocabulary, cited by Ducange (sub v. *ventilogium*), has “*Ventilogium*, le coichet, qui est sur le mostier.” *Cochet* was the old French name for a weathercock.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=KJ0otPQFKssC&pg=PA115&lpg=PA115&dq=ventilogium&source=bl&ots=axJHFT81kk&sig=ACfU3U1FXlahGFvOkFrWW7vWYgMu9frF5w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjKhvzs-JjqAhURRqwKHRfpDPAQ6AEwAXoECAsQAQ#v=onepage&q=ventilogium&f=false>

Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary* “weathercock, n.”:

a1300 Neckam de Utensil. in Wright Vocab. 115 Ventilogium, veder-coc.

1340 Ayenbite (1866) 180 Þeruore hi byeþ ase þe wedercoc þet is ope þe steple, þet him went mid eche wynde.

a1400 G. Chaucer Against Women Unconst. 12 As a wedercok, that turneth his face With every wind. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 11.2.5 (PL 42.988): Et si tam violenta est, ut possit vocari amor, aut cupiditas, aut libido, etiam caeterum corpus animantis vehementer afficit: et ubi non resistit pigrior duriorque materies, in similem speciem coloremque commutat. Licet videre corpusculum chamaeleontis ad colores quos videt facillima conversione variari. Aliorum autem animalium quia non est ad conversionem facilis corpulentia, fetus plerumque produnt libidines matrum, quid cum magna delectatione conspexerint. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 4.7, LCL 492:410): felicitatis cultus maiore ex parte adulatione quam caritate erogatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 4.3 ext. 4 (LCL 492:384): Alexander Diogenen gradu suo diuitiis pellere temptat, celerius Dareum armis. Idem Syracusis, cum holera ei lauanti Aristippus dixisset, si 'Dionysium adulari uelles, ista non esses', 'immo', inquit 'si tu ista esse uelles, non adularere Dionysium'. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Jerome, *Epistola* 79.4 (PL 22.727): Ubi vile olusculum, et cibarius panis, et cibus potusque moderatus: ibi divitiae supervacuae, ibi nulla adulatio, quae vel praecipue fructum respicit. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.44 (PL 82.447): Nullum autem animal in tanta celeritate linguam movet ut serpens, adeo ut triplicem linguam habere videatur, cum una sit. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. Marianus Scotus, *Chronica* 1.5.21 (Basileae: Jacobus Parcus, 1559), (col. 207): in cautiorem factam custodiam fugit, et in Mausoleo regum se recepit: ibique maximos ut solebat cultus in referto horroribus solio, iuxta se suum collocauit Antonium, amotisque ad uenas serpentibus, sic morte quasi somno resoluta est. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Bede, *Super Parabolis Salomonis* 3.27 (PL 91.1018): Qui benedicit proximo suo voce grandi, etc. Voce grandi proximo benedicit, qui cum favore superfluae laudis extollit; vel malis videlicet actibus ejus contra justitiam favendo, vel bona plus justo laudando. Sed hic maledicenti assimilatur, quia plurimum laedit eum, cui laudando sive in mala actione confidentiam tribuit, seu in opere recto simplicitatem puri cordis minuit: ut videlicet bonum quod supernae mercedis intuitu inchoarat, transitoriae laudis amore consummet. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 69.5 (PL 36.869): Duo sunt genera persecutorum; vituperantium, et adulantium. Plus persequitur lingua adulatoris, quam manus interfectoris. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Petrus Comestor, Historia scholastica, Historia Evangelica, 16 (PL 198:1546): De magnitudine morbi Herodis. Dehinc variis affligebatur languoribus. Nam febris non mediocris erat, prurigo intolerabilis in omni corporis superficie, assiduis vexabatur colli tormentis, pedes intercutaneo vitio tumuerant, putredo testiculorum vermes generabat, creber anhelitus et interrupta suspiria, quae ad vindictam Dei ab omnibus referebantur. Ipse vero Jordanem transiens apud Callionem calidis aquis utebatur. Cumque corpus ejus oleo calidiori foveri medicis placuisset, in arcam plenam demersum ita dissolutum est, ut etiam lumina, quasi mortuus, resoluta torqueret, tamen ad clamorem astantium respicere visus est. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Gregory, *Moralia* 31.25.47 (PL 76.599): Quid autem per significationem locustae portendunt, quae plus quam caetera minima quaeque animantia humanis frugibus nocent, nisi linguas adulantium, quae terrenorum hominum mentes, si quando bona aliqua proferre conspiciunt, haec immoderatius laudando corrumpunt? [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Ambrose, *Hexameron* 5.22.76 (PL 14.237): Quam dulcis etiam in exiguo cicadis gutture cantilena, quarum cantibus medio aestu arbusta rumpuntur, eo quod magis canorae meridianis caloribus, quo puriorem aerem id temporis attrahunt spiritu, eo cantus resonant clariores. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. Siegried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton: University Press, 1986), (pp. 103, 105) on Friar John of Grimestone citing Augustine [18]: “Oleum demulcens lingua adulatoris est que mentes a rigore veritatis emollit ad noxia.” “A Flatterer’s tonge is a softening oil which relaxes minds from the rigor of truth to harmful things.” [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Pliny, *Natural History* 11.30 (LCL 353:486-487): homini icto putatur esse remedio ipsorum cinis potus in vino. magnam adversitatem oleo mersis et stellionibus putant esse,

For a human victim the ashes of the creatures themselves drunk in wine are thought to be a cure. It is thought that to be dipped in oil is a great disaster to geckoes as well as scorpions; [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Walter Mapes, *De palpone et assentatore* 109-112, in *Latin Poems*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Camden Society, 1844), 109: Hic laudat fortiter quicquid laudaueris, mutat sentenciam, si tu mutaueris; in risus soluitur in quos tu solueris; at pluit lacrimas cum ipse plueris. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Gregory, Registri 1.34 (PL 77.488): Nullus tibi fidelior esse ad consilium potest, quam qui non tua, sed te diligit. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Catonis Disticha 1.11-13 (LCL 434: 598-599): Dilige sic alios, ut sis tibi carus amicus; sic bonus esto bonis, ne te mala damna sequantur.

Rumores fuge neu studeas novus auctor haberi; nam nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.

Spem tibi polliciti certam promittere noli: rara fides ideo est, quia multi multa loquuntur.

Love other men; yet be your own true friend: Do good to good men so no loss attend.

12. Shun tattling, and the newest thing to say Seek not: closed lips hurt no one—speaking may.

13. Think not hopes built on promises are sure: Much said by many seldom proves secure.

Cf. Disticha Catonis 1.13, Ein Lehrbuch für Maximilian I, vol. II, pp. 33 – 41, Faksimileausgabe des Codex Ser. n. 2617 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien, ed. Otto Mazal (Salzburg 1981): Rem tibi promissam certam promittere noli: Raro fides ideo, quia multi multa loquuntur. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. William of Conches, Moralium dogma philosophorum I.A.1 in the Latin Library: Sed falsi amici pro consilio adulationem afferunt et una eorum (est) contentio, quis blandissime fallat. Ex quo innumerabilia ueniunt peccata, cum homines inflati oppinionibus turpiter irridentur. Vnde poeta: Nichil est quod credere de se non possit, cum laudatur diis equa potestas.

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/wmconchesdogma.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Cf. Jerome, *Epistola* 22.2 (PL 22.395): Adulator quippe blandus inimicus est. Nulla erit Rhetorici pompa sermonis, quae te etiam inter Angelos statuat, et beatitudine Virginitatis exposita, mundum subjiciat pedibus tuis. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Augustine, *Epistola* 145.2 (PL 33.593): Mundus quippe iste periculosior est blandus quam molestus, et magis cavendus cum se illicit diligi, quam cum admonet cogitque contemni. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Aristotle, cf. Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, book 18 trans. Robert Steele (New York: Cooper Square Publ., inc., 1966), 168-69: the hunter lieth in await, and taketh away the whelps, and fleeth soon away on the most swift horse that he may have. And when the wild beast cometh and findeth the den void, and the whelps away, then he reseth headlong, and taketh the fore of him that beareth the whelps away, and followeth him by smell, and when the hunter heareth the grutching of that beast that runneth after him, he throweth down one of the whelps; and the mother taketh the whelp in her mouth, and beareth him into her den and layeth him therein, and runneth again after the hunter. But in the meantime, the hunter taketh a ship, and hath with him the other whelps, and scapeth in that wise; and so, she is beguiled and her fierceness standeth in no stead, and the male taketh no wood rese after. For the male recketh not of the whelps, and he that will bear away the whelps, leaveth in the way great mirrors, and the mother followeth and findeth the mirrors in the way, and looketh on them and seeth her own shadow and image therein, and weeneth that she seeth her children therein, and is long occupied therefore to deliver her children out of the glass, and so the hunter hath time and space for to scape, and so she is beguiled with her own shadow, and she followeth no farther after the hunter to deliver her children.

Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 8.25.66 (LCL 353:50-51): Tigrim Hyrcani et Indi ferunt, animal velocitatis tremendae, et maxime cognitae dum capitur totus eius fetus, qui semper numerosus est. ab insidiante rapitur equo quam maxime pernici, atque in recentes subinde transfertur. at ubi vacuum cubile reperit feta (maribus enim subolis cura non est) fertur praeceps odore vestigans. raptor adpropinquante fremitu abicit unum ex catulis. tollit illa morsu et pondere etiam ocior acta remeat iterumque consequitur, ac subinde donec in navem regresso inrita feritas saevit in litore.

Hyrcania and India produce the tiger, an animal of terrific speed, which is most noticeable when the whole of its litter, which is always numerous, is being captured. The litter is taken by a man lying in wait with the swiftest horse obtainable, and is transferred successively to fresh horses. But when the mother tiger finds the lair empty (for the males do not look after their young) she rushes off at headlong speed, tracking them by scent. The captor when her roar approaches throws away one of the cubs. She snatches it up in her mouth, and returns and resumes the pursuit at even a faster pace owing to her burden, and so on in succession until the hunter has regained the ship and her ferocity rages vainly on the shore. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Naturale* 19.112 (Venice: Hermanus Liechtenstein, 1494) (f. 243ra-b): Tygris vbi vacuum rapte sue sobolis cubile inuenerit: ilico raptors vestigiis insistit. At ille quamuis equo vectus fugaci; Videns tamen velocitatem fere se non posse effugere vbi se ei contiguum viderit; spheream de vitro proijit. At illa imgagine sui illudis: et sobolem putans imperum reuocit: colligere fetum desiderans.

<http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/0005/bsb00056560/images/index.html?id=00056560&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=515> [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. Augustine, *Confessiones* 10.5.7 (PL 32:782): Et certe nunc videmus per speculum in aenigmate, nondum facie ad faciem (1 Cor. 13:12): et ideo quamdiu peregrinor abs te, mihi sum praesentior quam tibi, et tamen te novi nullo modo posse violari; ego vero quibus tentationibus resistere valeam, quibusve non valeam, nescio. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)