108 Concealment (*Dissimulacio*)

Sometimes concealment proceeds from negligence, and sometimes from prudence. In the first case, the sin is chiefly in superiors. In the second, it is virtuous when there is no danger in delay.

¶ In the first way, Heli the priest concealed the sins of his sons and therefore he was punished in himself and in his sons, 1 Kings 2[:17].

¶ In superiors, certainly, such concealment is grave, also because the one himself who sins perishes, others take boldness and example for sinning, therefore it is said in Eccli. [23[:13]: “If he dissembles it, he offends double”

Concerning the second, Gregory says in *Pastoral Care*, c. 21,[[1]](#endnote-1) sometimes the vices of the superiors are prudently concealed, sometimes are maturely to be tolerated, sometimes are subtly to be scrutinized, sometimes are gently to be made known, and sometimes are vehemently to be exclaimed.

¶ In the first case, when the offending one recognizes himself to be caught and when he sees that he was tolerated, then he is ashamed to increase his faults, according to Augustine, book one, *De chordis decem.[[2]](#endnote-2)* In two cases the superior can conceal, such as when he expects a more opportune time, or if he believes the subjects to become worse if they are corrected then. Wherefore Bernard, *Ad Eugenium*, book 4,[[3]](#endnote-3) you do not know many things, you conceal more, some you forget. Wherefore, Chrysostom, *On Matthew*, homily 5,[[4]](#endnote-4) some injuries are common, that is, overflowing onto the community, some are personal.

¶ In the first ones, to conceal is wicked, as is evident above in Heli [1 Kings 2:25], but in the second, to conceal is virtuous. Wherefore Job [3:26] said, “Have I not dissembled?” Similarly with Saul, when he was first made king he heard some to say only “Shall this fellow be able to save us? … But he dissembled as though he heard not,” 1 Kings 10[:27]. Similarly, it seems in nature according to the Philosopher, book 8, *De animalibus,* c. 7,[[5]](#endnote-5) the wolf who is stoned dissimulates until he can attack the stone-thrower. Thus did King David, 2 Kings 19[:23]. He dissimulated when he heard Semei curse him. Eccli. 32[:12]: “In many things be as if you were ignorant,” pretending that you do not know. Wherefore the verse of Cato,[[6]](#endnote-6) it is sometimes prudent to feign stupidity.

1. Gregory, *Regulae pastoralis* 2.10 (PL 77:44): Sciendum quoque est quod aliquando subjectorum vitia prudenter dissimulanda sunt, sed quia dissimulantur, indicanda; aliquando et aperte cognita, mature toleranda, aliquando vero subtiliter et occulta perscrutanda; aliquando leniter arguenda, aliquando autem vehementer increpanda. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, cf. Gregory, *De expositione veteris ac novi testamenti* 2.3.71 (PL 79:963): Nonnulla subjectorum vitia prudenter dissimulanda sunt, sed quia dissimulantur indicanda, ut cum delinquens et deprehendi se cognoscit et perpeti, has, quas in se [Text. tacite.] tolerari considerat, augere culpas erubescat, seque judice puniat quem sibi apud se rectoris patientia clementer excusat. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, *De consideratione ad Eugenium* 4.6.20 (PL 182:786): Multa nescias, plurima dissimules, nonnulla obliviscaris. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum* 1 (Venice,1503), (4:fol. 3r): Si quidem haec ipsa sunt quibus facile monstratur: quoniam malignus spiritus et daemon quidem ferus, hostisque naturae: et impugnator castitatis totiusque honestatis inimicus: omnia sursum, deorsumque permiscens: eorum mentibus inspirauit. Cum enim communes: omnibus faciant coniuges: nudasque ad palestram uirgines ducant: ad spectaculum hominum et libidinis irritamentum: cum occultas concilient nuptias: omnes in unum ex consensu luxuriae pecunias conferentes, ac peruertentes leges, finesque naturae. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 8.5, 594a30-31 (Barnes 1:930): The solitary wolf is more apt to attack man than the wolf that goes with a pack. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Pseudo-)Cato, *Dicta Catonis* 2.18 (LCL 606-607): stultitiam simulare loco, prudentia summa est.

   To act the fool at times is truly wise. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)