134 Fame or Infamy (*Fama uel Infamia*)

“A good name makes the bones fat,” Prov. 15[:30], which is true in a good man. For a good name renders a man more devoted to God, just as it is evident in Judith who, because of her victory accomplished against Holofernes, was made most famous, Judith 16[:22]. And, this is evident in Esther, the fame of whose name grew because of the liberation of her people, Esth. 9[:29]. And since out of this they are not elevated, for who because of fame grows proud. The foolish man is just as Boethius shows, *De consolatione,* prose 7,[[1]](#endnote-1) fame of this time worked for eternity little or none, because the whole world is as if a point in respect to heaven, and the fame of one man cannot be diffused through that point. Therefore, those glorying in such fame accept their reward from the words of a month which quickly vanishes.

¶ Again, after death fame does not last, therefore Paul said, 2 Cor. 6[:4-8]: “In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God,” and it follows, “By honor and dishonor.” The ministers of God in this life are in dishonor among the evil, but among the good they are in good honor. This also is evident in Christ pondering this: for a good name is necessary to man because of others, but especially to superiors whose life is an example to others, just as in Luke [8:16]. For in a candle which lights all who are in the house, but if it is extinguished through an evil life or opinion, its smoke infects and corrupts the bystanders to God as it might generate leprosy.

Therefore, according to the saying of the wise man,[[2]](#endnote-2) he is rude who neglects his honor, because of which Paul, Philip. 4[:8], said, “Whatsoever of good fame … think on these things.” But fame or good conscience is like a worm shining in the darkness from a distance but examined in the light it is ugly. But it is just as concerning something fragrant, that so much more one approaches it so much the more it attracts, so fame which proceeds out of virtue, 2 Paral. 9[:1, 6]: “When the queen of Saba heard of the fame of Solomon,” and saw his prudence she said, “You have exceeded the fame with your virtues.” And just as a good odor attracts, so an evil offends and makes one recede, just as happened with the sons of Heli, [1] Kings [2:12]. And just as beasts better follow their prey through smell than through tracks, so the subjects better follow Christ through the fame of the superior, Can. 1[:3]: “We will run after you to the odor of your ointments.”

Wherefore, Chrysostom, *Homilia* 6,[[3]](#endnote-3) he lives well if he only saves those who have a good name, he edifies many. For what good does it do if in pursuing a good life you save yourself and in having an evil fame you scandalize many. For just as smoke puts men to flight having tender eyes from a house, so smoke in the fame in a superior puts to flight the simple from the house of the church, Apo. 15[:8]: “The temple was filled with smoke … and no man was able to enter.” Therefore, Chrysostom says, *Homilia* 8,[[4]](#endnote-4) that the doctor is first solicitous of his reputation rather than of his wages. For when the reputation became evident, then he exacted wages according to his labor. So also, it is concerning reputation, just as concerning the leper. For when the leper was roaming in his skin, he had to defer his judgment up to the judgment of the priest, Lev. 13[:3-8]. So, it is concerning the fame of the transitory which ought not to be pronounced again except through the judgment of the superior. Wherefore, Seneca, book 10, *De controversia,* chapter 5,[[5]](#endnote-5) never by a single rumor is the public fame corrupted. Wherefore, Averroes, commonly upon the book *De sompno et vigilia*,[[6]](#endnote-6) matters which are famous among all are necessary according to the whole or according to the part.

¶ For it is impossible that the famous be totally false. However, there are five things denigrating fame, and particularly in preaching useless discourse and fickleness. This makes men to become worthless frequently in the streets where rarely are they seen in admiration and veneration. Wherefore, says Augustine, *Super Johannes,[[7]](#endnote-7)* that they make miracles vile with repetition, the impulse of such ones seems to be that of flies, Wisdom last chapter [19:10]: “For the people how the ground brought forth flies instead of cattle, and how the river cast up a multitude of frogs instead of fishes.” A fly lacks bones on the inside and wings on the outside; it is an animal insolent and unquiet. According to Gregory, *Moralia* 18.[[8]](#endnote-8) Because in man religion produces the arrogant without the solidity of virtues and the wings of contemplation. For animals, that is, for the ancient religious who were accustomed to be vigorous in sense, strong in vigor, and useful in fruitfulness. Wherefore, Jer. 14[:10]: “Thus says the Lord to his people, that have … rested, and have not pleased the Lord.”

Second, what obscures is levity which makes them not to be believed. When however, they quit being solid and mature, according to Ezech. 1[:7]: “The sole of their foot was like the sole of a calf's foot.” Gregory, *Homilia* 3,[[9]](#endnote-9) the foot of a mature calf moves, it is strong and divided, so the preacher ought to be mature, strong, and discrete in work. For hardly is preaching received of the light man, Job 24[:18]: “He is light upon the face of the water.” The face of the water is moved at every wind. Thus, such a one follows every desire, by which the contrary is said in Psal. [34:18]: “I will praise you in a strong people.”

Third, what obscures is conformity to secular matters, such as in conviction, in speaking, and in gesture, according to that of Ose. 4[:9]: “Like people like priest.” And when Peter says [Rom. 12:2]: “Be not conformed to this world.” These however multiply the vanities of the world, the laughter of the catechumens, which is against Seneca who says, *Epistle* 9,[[10]](#endnote-10) He who studies with a philosopher should take away with him some one good thing every day: he should daily return home a sounder man or in the way to become sounder. So, the preacher who is as a philosopher among the people, he ought to be as the sun illuminating, inflaming, changing those to which they have entered upon, according to that of Mark, the last chapter [16:17]: “They shall speak with new tongues.”

Fourth, what denigrates is the infirmity of example, against which Tit. 2[:7]: “In all things show yourself an example of good works,” as “ships carrying fruits” [Job 9:26]. But by man the worldly one can say that of the Psal. [73:9]: “Our signs we have not seen,” that is, good examples, “there is now no prophet.” Of such a kind he should be.

1. Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophiae*, book 2 prose 7 (PL 63:712): Ita fit, ut quamlibet prolixi temporis fama, si cum inexhausta aeternitate cogitetur, non parva, sed plane nulla esse videatur.

Cf. (PL 63:709): Omnem terrae ambitum, sicuti astrologicis demonstrationibus accepisti, ad coeli spatium, puncti constat obtinere rationem: id est, ut si ad coelestis globi magnitudinem conferatur, nihil spatii prorsus habere judicetur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 355 1.1.1 (PL 39:1569): Qui fidens conscientiae suae negligit famam suam, crudelis est; Peter Abelard, *Ad amicum suum consolatoria*, De infamatione turpitudinis: "Qui, fidens conscientie sue, negligit famam suam, crudelis est." [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum,* Homilia 6 ex capite 4 (PG 56:673): Qui enim bene vivit, se solum salvat: qui autem bonam habet opinionem, multos aedificat (1 Tim. 3:7). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum,* Homilia 8 ex. capite 4 (PG 56:679): Sicut novitius medicus intrans in civitatem, et volens ostentationes dare artificii sui, omnes venientes ad se curat, et non tantum cogitat de mercede accipienda, quantum de opinione sua commendanda; cum autem manifesta fuerit fama ejus bona, tunc secundum laborem suum incipit exigere mercedem. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Seneca the Elder, *Declamationes* Controversiae 10.5.13 (LCL 464:460): Numquam unius <male> facto publica fama corrumpitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Averroes, cf. Aristotle, *On Sleep* 2, 455b21-28 (Barnes 1:724): men apply to sleep this metaphorical term, calling it a rest: we conclude tht its end is the conservation of animals. But the waking state is the goal, since the exercise of sense-perception or of thought is the goal for all beings to which either of these appertains; in as much as these are best, and the goal is what is best. Again, sleep belongs of necessity to each animal. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium tractatus* 9.1 (PL 35:1458): Ipse est enim Deus qui per universam creaturam quotidiana miracula facit, quae hominibus non facilitate, sed assiduitate viluerunt: [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Gregory, *Moralia* 18.43.68 (PL 76:78): Musca enim nimis insolens et inquietum animal est. In qua quid aliud quam insolentes curae desideriorum carnalium designantur? [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Gregory, *Homilia* 3.4 (PL 76:807): In sanctis ergo praedicatoribus planta pedis est vituli, scilicet mature incedens, et fortis, et divisa, quia unusquisque praedicator et venerationem habet in maturitate, et fortitudinem in opere, et divisionem ungulae in discretione. Non enim facile praedicatio ejus accipitur, si levis in moribus esse videatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Seneca, *Epistula* 108.4 (LCL 77:230): Qui ad philosophum venit, cotidie aliquid secdum boni ferat: aut sanior domum redat aut sanabilior. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)