401 Hypocrite, Hypocrisy (*Ypocrita, Ypocrisis*)

Christ preaching against hypocrisy, Luke 12[:1] says, “Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Chrysostom, *Homilia* 19,[[1]](#endnote-1) no one thing so drives away the good, as the simulated good. For manifest evil is put to flight. Evil under the species of good is hidden, while it is not recognized, nor guarded against. The reason of this is because philosophers have done many good things. However, on account of simulation, feigning of sanctity and justice they lost it all. For 1 Cor. 5[:6]: “HA little leaven corrupts the whole lump.” Because a little deception consumes the sweetness of devotion. However, it is said leaven (*fermentum*) as if fermenting the mind (*fermens mentem*), because it makes the mind to be roused because just as yeast fattening the whole jar of anything is poured out and what is fat and filthy remains. So, in growing fat devotion is poured out, because the leaven of hypocrisy and matter remain. Therefore, Christ taught, Matt. 6[:16]: “When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces,” that is, they place themselves outside the natural bounds, “that they may appear unto men,” and it follows, “Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.”

Seneca, *Epistula* 48,[[2]](#endnote-2) frankness and simplicity befit goodness. Not when the image is burnished with the material grace of life, another is not put under a colander, but when its interior defect is then colored by the exterior. So, when a person is good and healthy on the inside, there is no need to color the outside. The figure for this, Gen. 3[:7] concerning our first parents who after they sinned covered themselves. Note here that the hypocrite is like the spider which eviscerates itself to weave its web, which by a small wind is blown away. So, the hypocrite puts forth a web of an honest life with great labor, which with a modest wind of praise or vituperation is blown away. Wherefore in Job 8[:14] it is said, “His trust shall be like the spider's web.” and Isai. 59[:4-5]: “They trust in a mere nothing; they have woven the webs of spiders.”

Chrysostom, as before,[[3]](#endnote-3) but you say to me, how is he not a Christian, whom I see professing Christ, offering the sacrifice, baptizing, ministering the sacraments, reading the holy scriptures. But a monkey has all the members of a man, and imitates a man in his bearing, why therefore is he not called a man. The figure for this, 3 Kings 10[:10, 18, 22] monkeys were carried to king Solomon with silver and gold and ivory and peacocks in hands, because every kind of men are carried to Christ in the ship of the present Church. In truth with the king pacified the hypocrites who escape have the bearing of men and yet are not men. Wherefore Peter of Ravenna,[[4]](#endnote-4) things to be remembered on the day of ashes, says hypocrisy is a subtle evil, a secret virus, a hidden poison, pretense of virtues, a moth of holiness. It simulates secure things, tricks prosperous things, pretends to be careful. It destroys fasting by fasting, it empties prayer by prayer, it casts down mercy by mercy. Hypocrisy is known as fever cooled by a cup it pledges passion. What in bodies is dropsy, it is this in souls, that is hypocrisy. The dropsical thirsts by drinking, hypocrisy inebriated thirsts.

Therefore, Christ said [Matt. 6:16]: “Be not as the hypocrites, sad.” Hypocrisy makes of virtue vice, of truth a lie, of profit expense, of remission a sin. And he places the example of the farmer who if he does not press into the earth the plow, neither will he make a deep furrow, nor will he cut the thorns, nor turn over the grass, nor place the seed in its due depth. He lies to himself, not the earth. He makes a loss for himself, not the earth.

1. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* hom 19, ex cap.7:16 (PG 56:736): Nulla autem res sic exterminat bonum, quemadmodum simulatum bonum. Nam manifestum malum quasi malum fugitur et cavetur: malum autem sub specie boni celatum, dum non cognoscitur, nec cavetur, sed quasi bonum suscipitur, et ideo conjunctum bono exterminat bonum. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, *Epistula* 48.12 (LCL 75:320-321): Aperta decent et simplicia bonitatem.

   Frankness and simplicity beseem true goodness. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Hom. 19 ex cap. 7:15 (PG 56:737): Sed forte dicis, Quomodo dicere illum possum non esse Christianum, quem video Christum confitentem, altare habentem, sacrificium panis et vini offerentem, baptizantem, Scripturas sanctorum legentem, omnem ordinem sacerdotii habentem? … Quoniam et simia hominis habet membra, et per omnia hominem imitatur, numquid propterea dicenda est homo? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermones* 7 (PL 52:205): Hypocrisis subtile malum, secretum virus, venenum latens, virtutum fucus, tinea sanctitatis. Adversa omnia nituntur viribus suis, armis suis pugnant, impugnant palam: unde et caventur tam facile quam videntur. Hypocrisis secura simulat, fallit prospera, curiosa mentitur, et crudeli arte virtutes truncat mucrone virtutum: jejunium jejunio perimit, oratione orationem evacuat, misericordiam miseratione prosternit. Hypocrisis cognata febri frigido poculo propinat ardorem. Quod corporibus est hydrops, hypocrisis animabus, hoc est: hydrops bibendo sitit, hypocrisis inebriata sitit.

   (Pl 52:207): facit de virtute vitium, mendacium de veritate, de mercede dispendium, de remissione peccatum. Agricola si non impresserit cultrum, si sulcum non defoderit, si non exciderit sentes, si gramina non evulserit, si in tuto semina non locarit, sibi mentitur, non terrae; nec terrae facit damnum, sed sibi non facit fructum: [↑](#endnote-ref-4)