

QUESTION 111

Dissimulation and Hypocrisy

Next we have to consider dissimulation (*simulatio*) and hypocrisy (*hypocrisis*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Is every instance of dissimulating a sin? (2) Is hypocrisy a sort of dissimulation? (3) Is hypocrisy opposed to truthfulness? (4) Is hypocrisy a mortal sin?

Article 1

Is every instance of dissimulating a sin?

It seems that not every instance of dissimulating is a sin (*non omnis simulatio sit peccatum*):

Objection 1: Luke 24:28 says that our Lord “gave the impression that He was going on farther.” And in *De Patriarchis* Ambrose says that Abraham “spoke craftily to his servants” when he said at Genesis 22:5, “The boy and I will go with haste yonder, and after we have worshiped, will return to you.” But *giving the impression* and *speaking craftily* involve dissimulating, and one should not claim that there was sin in Christ or in Abraham. Therefore, not every instance of dissimulating is a sin.

Objection 2: No sin is advantageous (*utile*). But as Jerome says about 1 Kings 4 10:18ff., “The example of Jehu, king of Israel, who slew the priest of Baal while pretending that he desired to worship idols, should teach us that dissimulation is useful and at times to be employed.” And as 1 Kings 21:13 tells us, David “disguised his face in the presence of Achish, the king of Gath.” Therefore, not every instance of dissimulating is a sin.

Objection 3: The good is opposed to the bad. Therefore, if it is bad to simulate what is good, then it will be good to simulate what is bad.

Objection 4: In Isaiah 3:9 it is said against certain individuals, “They have proclaimed their sin like Sodom, and they have not hidden it.” But hiding a sin involves dissimulating. Therefore, sometimes it is not reprehensible to make use of dissimulation. Therefore, dissimulating is not always a sin.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Isaiah 16:14 (“In three years ...”) says, “In comparing these two evils, it is a lesser evil to sin openly than to simulate holiness.” Therefore, dissimulating is always a sin.

I respond: As has been explained (q. 109, a. 3), the virtue of truthfulness involves someone’s exteriorly revealing himself as he is by means of exterior signs. Now the exterior signs include not only words but also deeds. Therefore, just as it is opposed to truthfulness for someone to signify by his exterior words something other than what he has within himself, and this pertains to *lying*, so, too, it is opposed to truthfulness for someone to signify by signs of deeds or things something contrary to what is in him, and this properly pertains to *dissimulating*.

Hence, dissimulating is, properly speaking, a sort of lying that consists in signs of exterior deeds. And as was explained above (q. 110, a. 1), it does not matter whether one lies with words or with any other sort of deeds. Hence, since, as was established above (q. 110, a. 3), every instance of lying is a sin, it likewise follows that every instance of dissimulating is a sin.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine says in *Quaestiones in Evangelium* 2, “Not every instance of pretending is a lie on our part (*non omne quod fingimus est mendacium*). But when we pretend something that signifies nothing, then it is an instance of lying, whereas when our pretending has some signification, then it is not an instance of lying, but instead some sort of figure of truth.”

And he adds examples of figurative locutions in which the thing is pretended not in the sense that it is being asserted to be the case, but instead we present it as a figure of something else that we want to assert. So, then, our Lord pretended that he was going on farther by shaping His movement in the way that someone who wanted to go on farther would, and He did this in order to signify something figuratively, viz., that He was far from their faith, as Gregory claims, or, as Augustine claims, because He was going to go farther by ascending into heaven, but was in some sense detained on earth by their

hospitality. Abraham likewise was speaking figuratively. Hence, Ambrose says of Abraham that “he prophesied what he was ignorant of. For he was prepared to return alone, once his son had been immolated, but through his mouth the Lord told of what He Himself was preparing.” Hence, it is clear that neither of them engaged in dissimulation.

Reply to objection 2: Jerome is using the name ‘dissimulation’ in a broad sense (*large utitur nomine simulationis*) for any kind of pretending.

Now as is explained in a Gloss on the title line of Psalm 33 (“I will bless the Lord at all times”), David’s disguising his face was figurative pretending. On the other hand, Jehu does not have to be excused from sinning or from lying, since he was a bad man who did not back away from Jeroboam’s idolatry. Still, he is commended and rewarded with a temporal reward not for his dissimulation but because of the zeal with which he destroyed the worship of Baal.

Reply to objection 3: Some claim that no one can pretend to be bad, since no one pretends to be bad by doing good works, whereas if he does bad deeds, then he is in fact bad.

However, this argument is unconvincing. For someone can pretend that he is bad by means of deeds which are not bad in themselves but which have a certain kind of badness. And yet the dissimulation itself is bad, both by reason of the lying and by reason of its giving scandal. And even though it is thereby bad, it nonetheless does not become bad with the badness that it simulates. And since the dissimulation is bad in its own right and not because of what it simulates, whether this be something good or bad, the dissimulation is a sin.

Reply to objection 4: Just as someone lies with words when he signifies what is not so but not when he remains silent—which is sometimes permissible—so, too, dissimulation occurs when someone signifies what is not so with exterior signs of deeds or things, but not when he fails to signify what is so. Hence, someone can hide his own sin without dissimulation. And this how one should understand what Jerome says in the same place cited above, viz., “The second remedy after a shipwreck is to hide one’s sin, lest scandal be generated for others by it.”

Article 2

Is hypocrisy the same thing as dissimulation?

It seems that hypocrisy (*hypocrisis*) is not the same thing as dissimulation (*simulatio*):

Objection 1: Dissimulation consists in a sort of lying through deeds. But there can be hypocrisy even if someone shows exteriorly what he is doing interiorly—this according to Matthew 6:2 (“When you do acts of mercy (*cum facis eleemosynam*), do not sound the trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do”). Therefore, hypocrisy is not the same thing as dissimulation.

Objection 2: In *Moralia* 31 Gregory says, “There are some who both wear the habit of holiness and are unable to attain to meriting perfection. One should by no means believe that these individuals have joined the ranks of the hypocrites. For it is one thing to sin from weakness and another to sin from malice.” But those who wear a habit of holiness and do not attain to meriting perfection are dissimulators (*simulatores*), since the exterior habit of holiness signifies deeds of perfection. Therefore, dissimulation is not the same thing as hypocrisy.

Objection 3: Hypocrisy consists in just an intention; for in Matthew 23 our Lord says of the hypocrites that “they do all their works in order to be seen by men.” And in *Moralia* 31 Gregory says that “they never do anything without considering, with respect to any given action, how that action can be made pleasing to men.” But dissimulation consists not just in an intention, but also in an exterior deed; hence, a Gloss on Job 36:13 (“Dissimulators and crafty individuals provoke the wrath of God”) says, “The dissimulator simulates one thing and does another: he pretends to be chaste, and pursues lewdness,

he makes a show of poverty and fills his purse.” Therefore, hypocrisy is not the same thing as dissimulation.

But contrary to this: In *Etymologia* Isidore says, “*Hypocrisis* in Greek is translated as *simulator* in Latin, and this is someone who, while he is inwardly bad, makes a show of being good outwardly. For *hypo* is translated as *false* and *crisis* is translated as *judgment*.”

I respond: As Isidore says in the same place, “The name *hypocrite* is taken from the appearance of those who come on to the stage with a disguised face, altering their visage with a different color in order to attain the color of the person they are simulating, now with the appearance of a man, now with that of a woman, so as to mislead the people with their acting.” Hence, in *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, “Just as ‘hypocrites’ who pretend to be persons other than themselves play the role of what they are not—for instance, someone who plays the role of Agamemnon is not really Agamemnon himself but instead pretends to be him—so, too, in the churches, and in every aspect of human life, whoever wants to be seen as what he is not is a hypocrite. For instance, he pretends to be a just man, but he does not show himself to be just.”

So, then, one should reply that hypocrisy is dissimulation—not every instance of dissimulation, but only those instances in which someone simulates the persona of someone else, as, for instance, when a sinner simulates the persona of a just man.

Reply to objection 1: An exterior deed signifies an intention naturally. Therefore, when someone, through the good works which he does and which by their genus involve serving God, seeks to please not God but men, then he is pretending to have a right intention that he does not have. Hence, in *Moralia* 31 Gregory says, “Hypocrites subordinate God’s will to the will of the world, since when they make a show of their holy deeds, they seek not the conversion of men, but popular favor.”

Reply to objection 2: A ‘habit of holiness’, i.e., a religious or clerical habit, signifies a state by which one is obligated to perform works of perfection. And so when someone takes on a habit of holiness intending to transform himself into the state of perfection, if he fails because of weakness, he is not a dissimulator or a hypocrite, since he is not obligated to make his own sin manifest by relinquishing the habit of holiness. On the other hand, if he were to put on the habit of holiness in order to show that he is a just man, then he would be a hypocrite and a dissimulator.

Reply to objection 3: Two things are involved in dissimulation, as in lying: the one is a type of sign and the other is a type of thing signified. The bad intention in hypocrisy is thought of as the thing signified, and it does not correspond to the sign. On the other hand, in every instance of dissimulation and lying the exterior words or deeds, or whatever things can be sensed, are thought of as the signs.

Article 3

Is hypocrisy opposed to the virtue of truthfulness?

It seems that hypocrisy is not opposed to the virtue of truthfulness (*non opponatur virtuti veritatis*):

Objection 1: In dissimulation or hypocrisy there is a sign and what is signified. But neither of them seems to be opposed to any specific virtue. For hypocrisy simulates every sort of virtue, and it seems to do so through every sort of virtuous deed, e.g., through fasting, prayer, and works of mercy, as Matthew 6:2-16 shows. Therefore, hypocrisy is not opposed specifically to the virtue of truthfulness.

Objection 2: Every instance of dissimulation seems to proceed from some sort of guile (*ex aliquo dolo*) and hence is also opposed to simplicity (*simplicitas*). But as was established above (q. 55, a. 4), guile is opposed to prudence (*prudentia*). Therefore, hypocrisy or dissimulation is opposed not to truthfulness but rather to prudence or simplicity.

Objection 3: The species of moral acts are thought of in terms of the end. But the end of hypocrisy

is vainglory (*inanis gloria*) or the acquisition of wealth (*acquisitio lucri*); hence, a Gloss on Job 27:8 (“What is the hope of the hypocrite, if he takes something greedily, etc.”) says, “The *hypocrite* (in Latin, *simulator*) is a greedy grasper who desires to be venerated for his holiness even as he acts wickedly, who steals the praise of a life that is different from his own.” Therefore, since neither avarice nor vainglory is directly opposed to truthfulness, it seems that dissimulation, i.e., hypocrisy, is not directly opposed to truthfulness, either.

But contrary to this: As has been explained (a. 1), every instance of dissimulation is a kind of lying. But lying is directly opposed to truthfulness. Therefore, so is dissimulation, i.e., hypocrisy.

I respond: According to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* 10, contrariety is an opposition corresponding to the form from which a thing has its species. And so one should reply that there are two ways in which dissimulation or hypocrisy can be opposed to a virtue: (a) *directly* (*directe*) and (b) *indirectly* (*indirecte*).

Its *direct opposition* or *contrariety* should be seen in the very species of the act, which is taken from its *proper object*. Hence, since, as has been explained (a. 2), hypocrisy is a sort of dissimulation by which one pretends that he has a persona which he does not have, it follows that hypocrisy is *directly* opposed to truthfulness, through which, as *Ethics* 4 explains, one shows himself to be, in life and in speech, such as he is.

On the other hand, hypocrisy’s *indirect opposition* or *contrariety* should be seen in various accidents, e.g., in some remote end or in some instrument used in the act or in any other thing of this sort.

Reply to objection 1: When a hypocrite simulates some virtue, he takes it as an end not with respect to its *existence*, in the sense that he wishes to *have* the virtue, but instead with respect to *appearance*, in the sense that he wishes to *appear to have* it. From this it does not follow that hypocrisy is opposed to the virtue in question; what follows instead is that it is opposed to *truthfulness*, insofar as the hypocrite wants to *deceive* men concerning that other virtue.

Now the hypocrite does not take on the works of that other virtue in the sense that those works are intended *in their own right*; rather, they are intended *instrumentally* as signs of that virtue. Hence, hypocrisy does not thereby have a *direct* opposition to that virtue.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (q. 55, a. 3), prudence is directly opposed to craftiness (*astutia*), to which it belongs to find certain *apparent* ways, and not *real* ways, to accomplish one’s purpose. Now the execution of craftiness occurs, properly speaking, through guile (*dolus*) in speech and through fraud (*fraus*) in deeds. And guile and fraud are related to simplicity in the same way that craftiness is related to prudence.

Now guile and fraud are principally ordered toward deceiving and sometimes, secondarily, toward doing harm. Hence, it belongs directly to simplicity to preserve oneself from deceiving. And as was explained above (q. 109, a. 2), on this score the virtue of simplicity is the same as the virtue of truthfulness and differs from it only conceptually, since it is called truthfulness insofar as the signs agree with what is signified, whereas it is called simplicity insofar as it does not tend toward diverse things, so that, namely, it does not *intend* one thing interiorly and *pretend* something else exteriorly.

Reply to objection 3: Wealth or glory is the *remote* end of the dissimulator, as of the liar. Hence, the species is given not by this end, but instead by the *proximate* end, which is to show outwardly something other than what is. Hence, it sometimes happens that someone pretends great things about himself not for the sake of anything else, but rather out of a sheer desire to dissimulate—just as the Philosopher observes in *Ethics* 4 and just as was explained above in the case of lying (q. 110, a. 2).

Article 4

Is hypocrisy always a mortal sin?

It seems that hypocrisy is always a mortal sin:

Objection 1: In a Gloss on Isaiah 16:14 Jerome says, “To compare the two evils, it is less serious to sin openly than to simulate holiness.” And a Gloss on Job 1:21 (“As it has pleased the Lord, etc.”) says, “Simulated justice (*aequitas*) is not justice, but is instead a twofold sin.” And a Gloss on Lamentations 4:6 (“The wickedness of my people has become greater than the sin of Sodom”) says, “He deplores the abominations of a soul that falls into hypocrisy, the wickedness of which is greater than the sin of Sodom.” But the sins of the people of Sodom were mortal sins. Therefore, hypocrisy is likewise always a mortal sin.

Objection 2: In *Moralia* 31 Gregory claims that hypocrites sin out of malice. But this is something absolutely serious that belongs to a sin against the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is always the case that a hypocrite commits a mortal sin.

Objection 3: No one deserves God’s wrath and exclusion from God except because of mortal sin. But through hypocrisy one deserves God’s wrath—this according to Job 36:13 (“Dissimulators and crafty individuals provoke the wrath of God”). Likewise, the hypocrite is excluded from the vision of God—this according to Job 13:16 (“No hypocrite will come into His sight”). Therefore, hypocrisy is always a mortal sin.

But contrary to this 1: Hypocrisy is lying with deeds, since it is a sort of dissimulation. But not every instance of lying with the mouth is a mortal sin. Therefore, neither is every instance of hypocrisy.

But contrary to this 2: The hypocrite’s intention is to appear to be good. But this is not opposed to charity. Therefore, hypocrisy is not in its own right (*secundum se*) a mortal sin.

But contrary to this 3: As Gregory explains in *Moralia* 31, hypocrisy is born of vainglory. But vainglory is not always a mortal sin. Therefore, neither is hypocrisy.

I respond: There are two [parts of] an instance of hypocrisy, viz., (a) a lack of holiness and (b) a simulation of holiness. Therefore, if a hypocrite is said to be someone whose intention is directed at *both* these parts, in the sense that he cares only about *appearing* to be holy and not about *having* holiness, as hypocrisy is normally understood in Sacred Scripture, then it is clear that hypocrisy is a mortal sin. For no one is totally bereft of holiness except through mortal sin.

On the other hand, if a hypocrite is said to be someone who intends to simulate holiness, which he falls short of through mortal sin, then even though he is in a state of mortal sin and so lacks holiness, still, the dissimulation itself is not always a mortal sin for him and is sometimes a venial sin. This has to be determined from his end. If his end is incompatible with charity with respect to God or neighbor, then the hypocrisy will be a mortal sin, e.g., when he simulates holiness in order to disseminate false doctrine or in order to attain an ecclesiastical office unworthily, or to attain any other temporal goods which he treats as his end. By contrast, if his intended end is not incompatible with charity, then the hypocrisy will be a venial sin, e.g., when someone delights in the fiction itself; of this sort of individual the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 4 that “he seems more vain than evil.” For the same line of reasoning holds for both lying and dissimulating.

However, it sometimes happens that an individual simulates the *perfection* of holiness, which is not necessary for salvation. And this sort of dissimulation is not always a mortal sin, and it is not always accompanied by mortal sin.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: This makes clear the replies to the objections.