

Acting Differently from What You Are
by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell
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Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. (Luke 12:1-2)

The Lord created our minds in such a way that we can speak and act differently from what we think and love. This ability to hide what is going on in our mind can be a source of great evil or of great good, depending on how we use it. However, it is also only a temporary condition. In the life after death we will no longer be able to pretend to be different from what we are on the inside.

This world that we live in now is less real than the spiritual world. The Lord allows things in this natural world to appear to be different from what they really are. In the doctrinal terms of the New Church there is often no correspondence in the way things appear in the natural world. The teachings for the New Church define the concept of correspondence in this way:

“Correspondence is the appearing of the internal in the external” (*Arcana Caelestia* 5423, Potts translation). A smile on a person's face may reflect or correspond to goodwill in that person's heart or it may mask the cunning hatred that lies hidden within the pleasant appearance. In this latter case there is no correspondence between the smile and the person's heart.

While this lack of correspondence can exist in this world, it will not exist in the life after death. Imagine what this could mean if your internal thoughts and feelings appeared now! Suppose after church today as you stand among the people who are talking pleasantly you see someone who has irritated you recently and you hear your voice saying “I really don't like you at all, “ or perhaps you might say something considerably worse. Turning in embarrassment you might hide yourself in crowd until you saw someone else and were reminded a tantalizing conversation you recently heard and again, without your conscious choice you hear your voice saying “Did you really have a huge argument with your daughter?” Life would be terrible if everything we thought came blurring immediately out of our mouths. For now we can hide much of what we think and feel, but there will come a time when as text promises: “...there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known” (Luke 12:1-2).

The Lord warned His disciples to beware of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Hiding what you really think can be very evil, but it can also be a blessing that we can hide some of our negative thoughts and concerns. There are two reasons for hiding our thoughts and feelings: one, because of self-interest, we want the benefits of appearing to be good and trustworthy; the other, because we want to accomplish what is most useful and telling it like it is in the most direct terms often doesn't accomplish this goal.

The hypocrisy that seeks to take advantage of another, that seeks an evil goal, is a terrible thing. This is how one passage in the teachings for the New Church speak of it.

Deceit is called hypocrisy when people speak in godly ways but are ungodly at heart, or when they have charity on their lips but hatred in their heart, or when they express

innocence on their face and in their gestures but have cruelty in their soul and breast; consequently they are those who use innocence, charity, or godliness to deceive. (*Arcana Caelestia* 9013:4)

Deceit is compared to a deadly poison because it does terrible damage to those who are caught by it, but the effect of deceit on the one who practices it is even worse. We read further:

Deceit or hypocrisy in spiritual things cannot be taken away by the Lord. The reason is that deceit is like poison that penetrates right through to the inward parts; it kills all of the faith and charity there, and destroys remnants, which are the truths and forms of the good of faith and charity stored away by the Lord in a person inwardly. And when these have been destroyed no spiritual life at all survives any longer. (*Arcana Caelestia* 9014:2,4)

These words would mean nothing to someone who has accepted hypocrisy as a way of life. This state of mind doesn't appear suddenly. It is slowly built up from thoughts that are fostered and encouraged over years of living. Over years hypocrites develop better and better skills at hiding what they think so that they can enjoy the benefits of apparent goodness. The Lord is not really addressing confirmed hypocrites. Rather He give these stark words for people who notice with concern inclinations to hypocrisy in their own mind. Such people can fight those inclinations as a major threat to their spiritual life. For example, they can fight the thoughts that would suggest that religion is empty – that the only reason to attend church is to look good.

It can be a great blessing that the Lord gives us the ability to separate our actions from our thoughts. The reason why we don't immediately say what we think is that we can care and think many things in a moment. Our first thought might not be the good thing to say. Much harm would be done if we spouted off our first response to many situations. Our first response often needs to be qualified by other thoughts and other things we care about. The Lord has given us the ability to reflect on how our words and acts will appear to others. He hasn't given us this ability to aid us in hypocrisy. He given it to us to help us be more useful.

We are not being hypocrites when we soften up criticism to a level that might be accepted by the recipient. We are not being hypocrites when we intentionally speak more sternly to a child to help her recognize the gravity of a misdeed even when part of our mind is amused by what she has done or said. The concern that motivates the hiding is a concern for what will be useful. Yes, many things are hidden from view when we try to serve what is good. Many of our thoughts will not appear at all and many others will be tempered, but this is not hypocrisy. It is not the fostering of an evil love of hiding that will become impossible in life after death. Rather it will be fostering the love of serving, the love of doing what is best.

How would a married couple ever get out of the discordant times in their marriage if all they thought in those moods was expressed. The division in the two minds would become worse if all was said, with many a serious scar being inflicted on the tender skin of trust and confidence in the other. How would the warmth ever return if we couldn't act better than we feel? The Lord calls us to act better than we feel in those situations as the best way to prepare for the love to return. When we act more lovingly, the love has the possibility of returning

This law of the human mind applies to so much of our spiritual life. We often have to act better than what some voices in our mind call us to do. The voices of anger and revenge need to be recognized for what they are, but not given voice in our words and deeds. The voices of pain and sadness may need an expression but what is the most useful expression of them?

As we go through our lives, we find that many thoughts need to be hid but as we hide them from others, seeing them ourselves as the evil that they are, a good love will be fostered in our lives – a love that seeks no self-advantage. When we become wise in expressing this love, what is hidden is never seen; there is no condescension, no obvious posturing. In this world the person who benefits from what has been hidden often never knows what wasn't said or done.

In the life after death if you have developed a love of doing or saying what will be truly useful, you will not need to be afraid of having the core of your life revealed. That core will shine forth more brilliantly than ever before revealing the Lord's love and wisdom that you have received. And the greatest blessing is that you will find that you are no longer so plagued with inappropriate thoughts as you were in this world. Your love of serving will flow more naturally into good words and deeds. The natural limits that your present mind suffers from will not be a problem – much of the mental garbage will be gone. Many of the petty or crudely self-centered thoughts will no longer occur.

If we have tried to follow the Lord in this world, if we have tried to do and say what is useful we will find that though our love of serving may have worked quietly in our lives in this world, it will dominate our life to come. The words of our text will be fulfilled for us too: “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” When the true nature of our lives is revealed there will be nothing of the fearful result that occurs when a hypocrite's life is shown for what it is. Instead, the hidden good will be plainly seen. Instead our love of serving the neighbor will be made known and the good things that we do will be like a lamp set on a lampstand or a city built on a hill where all may see them and give glory to our Father, the Lord.

Hiding thoughts and cares can be a very dangerous thing when a person does it to hurt someone else or to take advantage of them. But all of us have much that we need to hide if we are going to be more useful to those around us. In the coming week there will be many times that you will be able to catch the first thought that comes to your mind and for a fleeting moment reflect on whether it is really what you want expressed in your life. In that moment you can ask yourself, “What use would be served by saying what I am thinking?” or “What would be the most useful way of expressing the concern or observation I have in mind?” Perhaps your response will be to say nothing, perhaps you will phrase your words differently. If, as you chose what you will do, you are concerned with what would be useful, that is, you are concerned with what the Lord would have you do, even if you do it imperfectly, you will be developing a habit of thought that will have the Lord smile upon your life. And when your life is over in this world, He will welcome you saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of Your Lord.”
AMEN

Lessons Luke 11:37-44, 53-54;12:1-3, *Doctrine of Life* 101, 102

Luke 11:37-44, 53-54, 12:1-3

³⁷ And as Jesus spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. ³⁸ When the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. ⁴² But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over *them* are not aware of *them*. “ . . . ⁵³ And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail *Him* vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.

¹ In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first *of all*, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

Doctrine of Life 101, 102

We Must Refrain from Evils as Being Sins and Fight Against Them as Though of Ourselves

It is of Divine order that we act in freedom in accordance with our reason, since to act in freedom in accordance with one's reason is to act of ourselves. However, these two faculties of freedom and reason are not properly our own, but are the Lord's in us. And insofar as we are human, they are not taken from us, since without them we cannot be reformed. For without them we cannot repent, cannot fight against evils, and cannot then produce fruits worthy of repentance. Now because we have our freedom and reason from the Lord, and act in accordance with them, it follows that we do not act of ourselves, but as though of ourselves.

The Lord loves people and wills to dwell with them, but He cannot love them and dwell with them unless He is received and loved in return. This and nothing else brings about conjunction [or a close relationship of love]. It was for this reason that the Lord gave mankind freedom and reason—the freedom to think and will as though of oneself, and the reason to do so rationally. It is impossible to love others and be conjoined with them without any reciprocity on that person's part, and neither is it possible to enter into someone and dwell with that person without any receptivity in them. Since the receptivity and reciprocity in a person come from the Lord, therefore the Lord says,

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. (John 15:5)

That the Lord is present in the truths and goods that we receive and have in us is something He also teaches:

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And ... I will love him ... and make (My) abode with him. (John 14:21,23)

Thus the Lord dwells in what is from Him in us, and we dwell in what we have from the Lord, thus dwelling in the Lord.