

Quotes on Hypocrites/Hypocrisy

by

Richard Baxter

It is the character of a hypocrite, to make a religion to himself of the cheapest part of God's service which will stand with his fleshly ends and felicity, and to reject the rest, which is inconsistent therewith.

Nothing more easy, more common, and more dangerous, then to make a Religion either of Names and Words, which he that useth doth not understand; or of mere speculations and superficial conceits; which never became *practical, habituate, and predominant*; nor were the *serious; effectual* apprehensions of the man.

O the disproportion that there is between the *verbal* service, and the more *costly* service of worldly Hypocritical professors.

As carnal men will take on them to be Christians, and profess with confidence that they believe in Christ, and accept of his salvation, and may contend for Christ, and fight for him, and yet, for all this, will have none of him, but perish for refusing him, who little dreamed that ever they had been refusers of him; and all because they understood not what his salvation is, and how it is carried on, but dream of a salvation without flesh-displeasing, and without self-denial and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness, or any great pains and labour of their own in subserviency to Christ and the Spirit: Hypocrites do most shew themselves in matters of self-interest: In the cheap part of Religion, they seem to be as good as any: as zealous for their party and opinions, (which they call the Truth) and as long and loud in prayer, and for as strict a way of Discipline with others: But touch them in their Estates or Names: Call them to costly works of Charity, or to let go their right for peace, or public good, or to confess and lament any sin that they commit, and you shall then see that they are but common men: and Self bears rule instead of Christ.

(*Hypocrites*) make men believe that those who set themselves to seek God with all their hearts are a company of enthusiasts or hypocrites. And when they cannot for shame speak that way in the pulpit, they will do it in private among their acquaintance. Alas! how many such wolves have been set over the sheep! If there was a traitor among the twelve in Christ's family, no wonder if there be many now. It cannot be expected that a slave of Satan, 'whose god is his belly, and who mindeth earthly things,' should be any better than 'an enemy to the cross of Christ.' What though he live civilly, and preach plausibly, and maintain outwardly a profession of religion? He may be as fast in the devil's snares, by worldliness, pride, a secret distaste of diligent godliness, or by an unsound heart that is not rooted in the faith, nor unreservedly devoted to Christ, as others are by drunkenness, uncleanness, and similar disgraceful sins.

When we see that men's lives do nullified their professions, and that while they look towards God, they row towards the world, and while they Hope for Heaven, their daily travel is towards Hell, and while they plead for Christ, they work against him, our Hopes of them are turned to necessary lamentation.

Truly Brethren, it is one of the mysteries of sin and self-deceit, that such a multitude of people, yea seemingly Religious, can think so well of themselves as they do, and bear it out with such audacious confidence, as if they were the real servants of Christ, when it is apparent even to the eyes of others, that they are not Crucified to the world, but live to it, and serve it day by day. How anxiously are they contriving for it, while their care to please God is so exceeding slender, that it takes up but little of their time and thoughts? How sweet are their thoughts of a plentiful estate? To have the world at will, houses, and lands, and full provisions for themselves and theirs, that they may be clothed with the best, and fare of the best, and sit with the highest, and be honoured and revered of all, how fine a life doth this seem to them... They can believe that to be the truth which befriendeth their worldly Interest; and that to be false and erroneous which is against it. The world chooseth many of their opinions for them, and much of their Religion, and telleth them what party they should side with, and what not: It telleth them how far they shall tolerate other men's sin, and how far not; how far they shall make profession of their faith, and how far they should conceal it from the knowledge of the world: And so as *Paul* saith, they account *Gain*

to be Godliness, 1 Tim. 6. 5. not only esteeming it better then down-right Godliness, but measuring out their Godliness by their Gain; making that to seem Religious which fitteth their carnal ends; and easily believing that which is for their worldly interest. How weak and silly reasons will persuade them that the point is true, the cause is good, the means is lawful, which serveth their turns for worldly ends? And the clearest unquestionable Evidences are nothing to them that are brought for the contrary. So potent a persuader is worldly Interest, that anything will serve where it takes part, and nothing prevail that it doth contradict.

As for those worldly time-serving hypocrites, which in all places creep in among the Saints, and do but serve themselves of Christ, let them know that God will one day require an account at their hands, of all these scandals which they have caused in the Church, and the ruin of poor ungodly souls that are dashed in pieces, and cast themselves into hell, by stumbling at this stone which their worldly practises have laid before them. If you would needs be worldlings, you were better have kept in the world among worldlings, then to have crept into the Church of Christ, and brought thither your scandalous worldly lives, to the dishonour of that Religion which condemneth your practises and you. Did not Christ warn you to count your costs, and never to dream of being his Disciples, unless you could forsake all and follow him under the Cross, in expectation of a promised treasure in Heaven?

If the main scope and drift of your life be for the flesh and the world, and God and Religion comes in but upon the by, you are then no better than unsanctified worldlings: Though you may do much in Religion, and be zealous about it, and seem the devoutest and most resolved professors in all the Country where you live... you are carnal wretches and no true Christians. O that you would let conscience do its office, and Judge you as we go along according to Evidence! It is not by one or two Actions that you can judge of your estate, but by the main scope, and bent, and drift of your life. What is your very heart set upon? What is your care, and your chief contrivances? Are they for Heaven or Earth?

What else do most live for or look after (other than their carnal selves)? And is not the common Piety, Religion and Charity of the world, a mere sending God some scraps of the leavings of carnal self; If the flesh be full, or have enough; then God shall have the crumb

that fall from its Table, or at most so much as it can spare: but till the flesh have done and be satisfied, God must stay even for these scarps and crumbs!

Religion doth consist in the Devoting of your selves and all to God, and improving his stock, and being Rich in good works, ready to distribute and communicate... God doth not call upon you for your charity, as if he would be beholden to you, or needed anything that you can give him; but because he will thus difference his hearty followers from complementing hypocrites... It is a certain mark of a hypocrite, to have anything in this world, so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ.

No man can be a Christian that takes not Christ for his Lord and Saviour; but no man without this denial can take Christ for his Lord and Saviour: and therefore no man without self-denial can be a Christian, and so be saved. He that makes himself his End cannot make Christ as Christ his way: for Christ is the way to the Father, and not to Carnal-self. Nay the business that Christ came upon into the world was to pull down and subdue this self.

Yea, the persons that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them.—if they live ungodly, you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise: if one of them falls in a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because that others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks, because some others have by heedlessness sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, they are all alike, and think yourselves as honest. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but, because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon.

Are ungodly men the less miserable, because they make profession of Christianity, or the more?