

HYPOCRISY

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"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

Nothing sickens people like hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is play-acting; pretending to be someone that you are not. In particular, pretending to righteousness and morality when in fact you are vicious or evil. A hypocrite is a person who prays on his knees on Sunday, and preys on his neighbours during the week.

Mind you, I suppose that it is possible to argue a case in defence of certain types of hypocrisy. A leader for example, or even a parent may well pretend to certain virtues in an attempt to provide a pattern. I remember hearing of a certain leading politician who always refused to be photographed while drinking beer, since it tarnished his image. This is fairly reprehensible; but are we better off when leading politicians boast about consuming large quantities of alcohol? Do we admire or respect them for this frank confession of what is, after all, a failure of self-control on their part? Do we imagine that it helps them to do their job better? Even an important brewery has ceased handing out its own product to its workers on the grounds that beer-drinking and efficiency don't mix. Which is better, hypocrisy or bad example? Both are shameful; hypocrisy at least points in the right direction.

You see that's one point in favour of a hypocrite. He acknowledges that there is a proper standard. Often a hypocrite is caught out because he sets high standards

for himself and for others; he cannot live up to those standards. That is why Christians are so vulnerable to this charge. In fact, it is the chief criticism of Christians; a Christian appears in the factory or the office, and, even before any wrong has been done there is a whispered campaign to vilify that person as a hypocrite. It will often not be long before some error like an outburst of temper or a poorly concealed lie will demonstrate that the whisperers were right. They can sit back, complacent. All Christians are hypocrites, they will say, and therefore there is no reason for me to be challenged by what they say. Right?

Wrong! Christians may often behave hypocritically - although I think that this is vastly exaggerated by their enemies. But, hypocrites or not, they point in the right direction. Criticism comes from fear and envy; fear that Christian standards are actually right standards; fear that there may be a God and that Jesus Christ may be the Son of God. The critic is not trying to do better - he is covering his own deficiency by attacking the failures of another person.

Have you stopped going to church because you claimed that church-people were hypocrites? Do you object to religious people on those grounds? Why....are you never hypocritical yourself? Can't you see that you should do right, even tho' the whole world is full of pretence and wickedness? Let me ask you this - are you a non-religious hypocrite?

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