124 Eloquence (*Eloquencia*)

Eloquence is designated by gold because among other metals it is the best, [2] Macc. last chapter [15:14], Jeremias appearing then to Maccabeus, who had to fight against the enemies, said, “Take this golden sword a gift from God, wherewith you shall overthrow the adversaries.” Because a superior ought to have eloquence in speaking. Wherefore Chrysostom[[1]](#endnote-1) is interpreted as golden mouth on account of eloquence and the sweetest way which he had in speaking and enriching, but the prophet Jer. 51[:7], abhorred the golden chalice of Babylon, where it was designated as the leper of eloquence building toward Gehenna.

Wherefore, Augustine, 4, *De doctrina Christiana*, c. 11,[[2]](#endnote-2) the sign of good and intelligent men is talent, in words it is to love the truth, not the words. For what good is a golden key, if it cannot open what we wish? Or what is the harm of a wooden key, if it can open what is closed? This eloquence is designated by the “golden earrings” which the servant of Abraham gave, Gen. 24[:22], because it serves only for the ears and not for the heart. Wherefore Augustine, *Epistola* 25,[[3]](#endnote-3) if you find a golden chalice in the earth, you give it to one of the Church. You have received from God a golden talent, and you wait upon the libidinous, and you rush yourself in it to the devil. Wherefore it is said in Prov. [11:22]: “A golden ring in a swine's snout, a woman fair and foolish.”

Therefore, it is said in Job 33[:7]: “Let not my eloquence be burdensome to you.” For according to Pliny,[[4]](#endnote-4) eloquence without manners is badly learned. Therefore in the first place the customs of the Lord are for learning eloquence. Wherefore Moses who was not eloquent, Exod. 4[:10]. Wherefore happily Capellanus wrote the book, *De nupciis Mercurii et Philogie,[[5]](#endnote-5)* that is, of eloquence and wisdom. And Augustine, book 9, *Confessiones*,[[6]](#endnote-6) merited some eloquence as if something golden in his rage as one lucky.

1. *Catholic Encyclopedia* “St. John Chrysostom”: (Chrysostomos, "golden-mouthed" so called on account of his eloquence). John — whose surname "Chrysostom" occurs for the first time in the "Constitution" of [Pope Vigilius](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15427b.htm) (cf. P.L., LX, 217) in the year 553. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm>  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 4.11.26 (PL 34:100): bonorumque ingeniorum insignis est indoles, in verbis verum amare, non verba. Quid enim prodest clavis aurea, si aperire quod volumus non potest? Aut quid obest lignea, si hoc potest? quando nihil quaerimus nisi patere quod clausum est. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Epistola* 26.6 (PL 33:107): Si calicem aureum invenisses in terra, donares illum Ecclesiae Dei. Accepisti a Deo ingenium spiritualiter aureum, et ministras inde libidinibus, et in illo satanae propinas teipsum! [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Pliny, *Epistula* 3.3.7 (LCL 55: 166-167): Proinde, faventibus dis, trade eum praeceptori, a quo mores primum mox eloquentiam discat quae male sine moribus discitur. Vale.

So with the gods’ good will you may entrust him to a teacher from whom he will learn right principles of conduct before he studies eloquence—for without principles this cannot be properly learned at all. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts* ed. and trans. William Harris Stahl with E. L. Burge, vol. 2, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Augustine, *Confessiones* 9.2.2 (PL 32:763): Et placuit mihi in conspectu tuo non tumultuose abripere, sed leniter subtrahere ministerium linguae meae nundinis loquacitatis; ne ulterius pueri meditantes non legem tuam, non pacem tuam, sed insanias mendaces, et bella forensia, mercarentur ex ore meo arma furori suo. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)