207 To Speak (*Loqui*)

God speaks to man and man to God, but God speaks doubly. According to Gregory, book 18,[[1]](#endnote-1) because either through himself or through his angelic creature. In the first way, he speaks uncertain things by inspiration either by words or by syllables. And according to Macrobius,[[2]](#endnote-2) God speaks triply: by threatening, by reminding, and by asserting. The first two kinds can be changed. The second is the state of men. The third is not changed.

Wherefore Gregory says, *Super Moralia*, Job 4[:1].[[3]](#endnote-3) There are four kinds of speaking. For these are of praising. So, Christ spoke, John 7[:46]: “Never did man speak like this man.” Some speak neither wisely nor eloquently and these are to be cast out, Isai. 32[:6]: “For the fool will speak foolish things.” Some speak wisely but not eloquently, and such are to be admitted, such was Moses, Exod. 4[:10]. Some speak eloquently but not wisely, and these are to be contemned, such was the presumptuous son of Eli, [1 Kings 2:12]. Job 33[:7]: “Let not my eloquence be burdensome to thee.” Pliny says[[4]](#endnote-4) that eloquence without principles is bad learning. And therefore, the first principles of eloquence then are to be learned. Therefore, Felix Capella or according to others Martianus (Capella) made his offspring, *De nupciis Mercurii et Philologie*,[[5]](#endnote-5) that is, of wisdom and eloquence.

Wherefore Augustine, in the fourth book, *De doctrina*, c. 12.[[6]](#endnote-6) The eloquent man thus ought to speak so that he teaches, that he delights, and that he persuades. For some buy eloquence, as if arms for his madness like Faustus (of Mileve).[[7]](#endnote-7) Seneca, *Epistula* 76,[[8]](#endnote-8) some arts pertain to cleverness, but the business of the soul is to be treated here. For the sick man does not seek the physician for eloquence, but for doing good medicine.

Concerning the second kind of speaking that is treated in Prov. 13[:3]: “He that keeps his mouth, keeps his soul: but he that has no guard on his speech shall meet with evils.” So, it is evident in the misguided woman who rashly spoke to the serpent.

Again, 2 Kings 1[:4] the Amalecite saying he had killed Saul was ordered to be killed.

Again, Augustine in *Sermone Domini in monte*, book 1,[[9]](#endnote-9) every excess of speaking comes from the Gentiles, who give their effort to exercising the tongue more than in cleansing the soul.

¶ Again, concerning the third kind of speaking, Gregory says *Super Ezechielem*, part two, homily nine.[[10]](#endnote-10) Just as bad air by persistent blowing infects the body, so perverse speaking constantly heard infects the soul. 1 Cor. 15[:33]: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Dogs bark at those going by, so do the evil at the pilgrims of Christ who “have not here a lasting city, [Heb. 13:14.]. And for often the exterior speaking indicated the interior quality of man. For John 3[:31]: “He that is of the earth ... of the earth he speaks. He that comes from heaven, is above all.” Luke 24[:14]: “And they talked together of all these things which had happened.”

Wherefore also in Matt. 26[:73] it is said, “For even your speech does discover you.” But there are many birds who never mute their voice, namely, Nehem. 13[:24]: “They spoke in the speech of Azotus,” which they were intending to crush, so many know how to speak of lust, but not of confession. Whatever kind of liquid or odor is in a vase, of such a kind comes out of the aperture. Therefore, says Isadore, *Etymologiae*, book 1, c. 19,[[11]](#endnote-11) in using words it will be necessary that matter, place, time be demanded, lest profane matters be mixed with religious, lest the shameless with chaste, lest the light with heavy, lest the lascivious with serious, lest the ridiculous with sad. Hence Gregory says, *Super Ezechielem*, first part, homily 41,[[12]](#endnote-12) that the teacher must think what, to whom, when, how, and how much he speaks. Because if one of these is lacking, it will not be an appropriate speaking. For it is written, if you offer rightly, however you do not divide rightly, you have sinned. We offer when with good study we perform good work; but we do not divide rightly, if we postpone having discretion in good work. For we ought to consider what we speak, and with the voice of Paul [Col. 4:6]: “Let your speech be seasoned with salt.”

Again, to whom we speak because often the word of rebuke which one person admits, another does not admit.

¶ Again when speaking because sometimes if the rebuke differs, afterwards it is accepted more benignly.

¶ The example [1 Reg. 25:36-37] of Abigail who did not want to explain the business of Nabal as drunkenness but to digestion.

Again, how we speak because sometimes the words which one would call back as a salute wounds another.

¶ The example of Paul teaching Titus [2:15] his disciple, he says, Argue, exhort, and reproach “with all authority.” However, [2] Timothy [4:2] he encourages saying, “Reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience.” What is it except that one who was of an envious spirit imposes an accusation of severity, he who was of a fervent spirit imposes mildness.

Again, how much we speak, lest that one who cannot stand much through a long sermon is drawn into aversion.

¶ The example, Paul in teaching Titus [2:15] his disciple says, Reprove, entreat, rebuke “with all authority.” However, in [2] Timothy [4:2] he encourages saying, “Reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience.” What is there except that one who was the spirit of envy and enjoined the accusation of severity, who was the spirit of fervor and enjoined softness.

Again, however much we speak, there is not one who can bear many things, who can take in a long sermon without loathing.

¶ The example of Paul who writing to the Hebrews [13:22] says, “I beseech you, brethren, that you suffer this word of consolation. For I have written to you in a few words.” The example of the physician who offers delicate food to the infirm stomach. Therefore, the most valid way of speaking is if it be with humility, Prov. 18[:23]: “The poor will speak with supplications.” Thence it is that Peter clearly is the prince of the Church above all the bishops, namely, he speaks by beseeching.

¶ Again, those things are to be considered which are said, that is, whether they tickle fame or by taking it away they harm it.

Again, what kind of things are said true or false, known or hidden.

Again, to whom things are said, that is whether to one who knows something before or to him who can correct and profit.

Again, why things are said, that is, whether with the intention of dishonoring, correcting, or condemning in matters or person. If therefore known things are said with an aim of suffering with or detesting, it is not serious. But it is otherwise if with an aim of congratulating or approving. If, however hidden things are said to these who know those things with an aim of condolence, it is not serious. If, however they are said to those not knowing nor wishing to correct with an aim of dishonoring it is mortal.

Again, man ought to speak of three things: of himself, of his neighbor, and of God.

¶ He ought to speak of himself. First his own iniquity in confession so that he may be absolved, so therefore he spoke of his infirmity, Job 7[:11]: “Wherefore I will not spare my mouth, I will speak in the affliction of my spirit.” But also, do this sorrowfully not boastfully, Job 10[:1]: “I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.” And as an infirm man ought not to say the infirmity of one place to be in another, but to shows the naked truth, so one confessing ought not to accuse others but himself, Mark 7[:35]: “The string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right.” Job 33[:3]: “My words are from my upright heart, and my lips shall speak a pure sentence.”

Again, just as a full vase does not resonate but only when emptied. So, one burdened by sins does not speak well, but when he is emptied by confession, Matt. 9]:33]: “After the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke.”

Again, fullness not only impedes the sound of confession but also approaching death, [1] Mach. 9[:55]: “At that time Alcimus was struck: and his works were hindered,” and it follows, “so that he could no more speak a word.” But note that one infirm speaks in convalescing, so a man through penance, Matt. 12[:22]: “He healed him, so that he spoke.”

Second, he ought to speak his own necessity in prayer so that he may be helped, so the poor man speaks to the rich, 1 Kings 1[:13]: “Now Anna spoke,” namely, for having children, Psal. [38:5]: “I spoke with my tongue: O Lord, make me know.” Prov. 18[:23]: “The poor will speak with supplications.”

Second, a man ought to speak to his neighbor about works of the evil to be corrected and this either by arguing if he be his superior or secretly by admonishing, Isai. 16[:7]: “To them that rejoice upon the brick walls, tell their stripes.” Note here Num. 22[:28] and 23:5] concerning the ass of Balaam.

Second, a man ought to speak to his neighbor of good things to be imitated, so the Church recites to the faithful the deeds of the saints and the jesters recite the prowess of princes, Judith 8[:21]: “You may be mindful how our fathers were tempted.”

¶ Third, the rewards of the elect are to excite those, so the mother to her son, Jer. 4[:12]: “I will speak my judgments with them.”

¶ Third, man ought to speak to God in three ways. First for the benefits of clemency that he may be loved, Luc. 2[:15]: “The shepherds said one to another.”

Second, works of power that he may be feared, Psal. [105:2]: “Who shall declare the powers of the Lord?” And Act. 2[:4]: “They began to speak with divers tongues.”

In the third place, teachings of wisdom so that he may be recognized, Psal. [118:46]: “And I spoke of your testimonies before kings.” And 1 Cor. 2[:6]: “We speak wisdom among the perfect.” But alas because some speak evil of God and of their neighbor, Psal. [77:19]: “And they spoke ill of God.” And 2 Mach. 4[:1]: “Simon, of whom we spoke before, and of his country, spoke ill of Onias,” who was good. Dogs bark at the good and the evil, so such ones. Therefore, they are to be fled as dogs, Eccli. 8[:5]: “Communicate not with an ignorant man, lest he speak ill of your family,” that is, of your works. Wherefore Pope Leo,[[13]](#endnote-13) all things are full of perils, full of snares; they incite cupidities, they lay enticements; they blandish with riches, they deter with condemned things; they torture the reproach of the tongue.

¶ Again,[[14]](#endnote-14) to be avoided are excessive speaking, idle speaking, and the speech of the wicked. In the first there is a great deal of straw but little of grain, Eccli. 20[:8]: “He that uses many words shall hurt his own soul.” For in excessive speaking sin is not absent.

Concerning the second,[[15]](#endnote-15) Psal. [11:3]: “They have spoken vain things everyone.” But also, this is to be feared because Matt. 12[:36]: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it.” The foregoing would be intolerable if one had to count every grain, but it will be heavier in the day of judgment to respond for every idle word, Job 39[:34]: “What can I answer, who hath spoken inconsiderately?” As if saying, “I know nothing” [2] Reg. [18:29].

Third,[[16]](#endnote-16) 1 Cor. [15:33]: “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” In a sign that the tongue ought to be guarded, it is imprisoned behind the walls of the teeth and in front of the wall of the lips, Eph. 4[:29]: “Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth.” And James 1[:19]: “Let every man be slow to speak.” Wherefore it is said in English: “See and hear and hold you still if that will have your will.” (**See and hear and hold thee still, If that will have thy will***.*) Wherefore in the *Vitis patrum*,[[17]](#endnote-17) abbot Agathus for three years carried a stone in his mouth that he might learn taciturnity. Whether however it is incumbent to certain persons to speak *ex officio*, otherwise they are in danger according to that, Isai. [6:5]: “Woe is me, because I have held my peace ... and kept silence from good things: and my sorrow was renewed,” [Psal. 38:3].

Wherefore they who are silent when they should speak are like the sea bird about which Alexander Neckham narrates in his book *De naturis rerum*,[[18]](#endnote-18) because by some cries it is accustomed to signifying to all and to their shepherds the rise of the sea by which they should take care for themselves from the flooding. But on a certain day while that bird placed its bill in the mouth of a turtle, it closed its mouth and the bird could not cry out and thus the birds were drowned. This can be applied to the prelates who due to some riches or favors dissimulate or keep quiet in correcting, about whom that can be said in the Psal. [113:13]: “They have mouths and speak not.” And Isai. 56[:10]: “Dumb dogs not able to bark.” The example of the shepherd who by the panting of the wolf was impeded from crying out, against whom Tit. 2[:1]: “But speak the things that become sound doctrine.” Wherefore Rom. 15[:18]: “I dare not to speak of any of those things which Christ works not by me.” Wherefore Chrysostom, on that of [Matt. 5:22]:[[19]](#endnote-19) “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,” sins. Whoever transfers vessels to public uses, as it is fitting when Belshazzar was drinking from the vessels of the Lord, [Dan. 5:2].

¶ How dangerous it is therefore to transfer your consecrated mouth to scurrilous words, but many priests get for themselves such a habit through the frequent act of speaking evil because they hardly wish to offer anything other than scurrility, Matt. 12[:34]: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Against whom Paul, Act. 26[:25]: “I speak words of truth and soberness.”

1. Gregory, *Moralia* 28.1.2 (PL 76:447): Aut per semetipsum namque [Col.0447C] Dominus loquitur, aut per creaturam angelicam ejus ad nos verba formantur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Macrobius, cf. \_\_\_\_\_, *Super XX° capitulo Paradisi* vv. 49-54: Nam ea que Deus dicit commonendo vel comminando bene revocat, sed ea que asserendo dicit non revocat. Et ex hoc Macrobius dicit quod tripliciter Deus loqui contingit, et secundum hanc distinctionem intelligatur hic auctor.

<http://ww2.bibliotecaitaliana.it/xtf/view?docId=bibit000160/bibit000160.xml&doc.view=content&chunk.id=d3352e11841&toc.depth=1&brand=bibit&anchor.id=0> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory, cf. *Moralia* 5.13.30 (PL 75:695): Tria sunt hominum genera, quae gradatim ductis a se qualitatibus dissident. Sunt namque alii qui et ad loquendum prava concipiunt, a locutione sua nulla silentii gravitate [Col.0695B] refrenantur. Et sunt alii qui cum prava concipiunt, magno se silentii vigore restringunt. Et sunt nonnulli qui, virtutum usu roborati, usque ad eam celsitudinem provehuntur, ut ad loquendum, ne in corde quidem perversa concipiant, quae silendo compescant. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 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*.*

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, *De nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii*, *et de septem artibus liberalibus libri novem* 5.475 edidit Ulricus Fridericus (Frankfurt: Varrentrapp, 1836), p. 421: Eloquentia totum est. in toto igitur definiendum est sic: eloquentia est bene dicendi scientia, bene dicere autem utile est, utilis igitur eloquentia. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 4.12.27 (PL 34:101): Dixit ergo quidam eloquens, et verum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. 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-7)
8. Seneca, *Epistles* 75.5-6 (LCL 76:138-139): Aliae artes ad ingenium totae pertinent, hic animi negotium agitur.

Non quaerit aeger medicum eloquentem, sed, si ita conpetit, ut idem ille, qui sanare potest, compte de iis, quae facienda sunt, disserat, boni consulet. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Augustinus, *De sermone Domini in Monte* 2.3.12 (PL 34:1274): Et revera omne multiloquium a Gentilibus venit, qui exercendae linguae potius quam mundando animo dant operam.

And in reality, every kind of much speaking comes from the Gentiles, who make it their endeavour to exercise the tongue rather than to cleanse the heart. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Gregory, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1.9.21 (PL 76:881): Et sicut malus aer assiduo flatu tractus inficit corpus, ita perversa locutio assidue audita, infirmantium inficit animum, ut tabescat delectatione pravi operis, et assidui iniquitate sermonis. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 2.16.1 (PL 82:133): Jam vero in elocutionibus illa uti oportebit, ut res, locus, tempus, persona audientis efflagitat, ne profana religiosis, ne inverecunda castis, ne levia gravibus, ne lasciva seriis, ne ridicula tristibus misceantur. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Gregory, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1.11.12-16 (PL 76:910-912): Pensare etenim doctor debet quid loquatur, cui loquatur, quando loquatur, qualiter loquatur, et quantum loquatur. Si enim unum horum defuerit, locutio apta non erit. Scriptum quippe est: Si recte offeras, recte autem non dividas, peccasti (Genes. IV, 7, sec. LXX). Recte autem offerimus cum bono studio [Col.0911A] bonum opus agimus; sed recte non dividimus, si habere discretionem in bono opere postponamus. Considerare etenim debemus quid loquamur, ut juxta Pauli vocem, Sermo noster semper in gratia sale sit conditus. Pensandum vero nobis est cui loquamur quia saepe increpationis verbum quod haec admittit persona, altera non admittit. ... Pensandum quoque est quando loqui debeamus, quia saepe etsi differtur increpatio, postmodum benigne recipitur. Et nonnunquam languescit, si hoc quo ante proferri debuit tempus amiserit. Nam et sapiens mulier Nabal ebrium videns (I Reg. XXV, 36, 37), increpare de culpa tenaciae noluit, quem digesto vino increpationis suae verbis utiliter percussit. ... Pensandum quoque nobis est qualiter loquamur. Nam saepe verba quae hunc ad salutem revocant, alium vulnerant. Unde Paulus quoque apostolus qui Titum admonet, dicens: Argue cum omni imperio (Tit. II, 15), Timotheum exhortatur, dicens: Argue, obsecra, increpa in omni patientia et doctrina (II Tim. IV, 2). Quid est quod uni imperium, et alii patientiam praecipit, nisi quod unum lenioris, alterum vero ferventioris spiritus esse conspexit? Leni per auctoritatem imperii injungenda erat severitas verbi, is autem qui per spiritum fervebat per patientiam temperandus fuerat, ne si plus justo infervesceret, non ad salutem vulnerata reduceret, sed [Col.0911D] sana vulneraret. 16. Curandum quoque quantum loquamur, ne si ei qui multa ferre non valet verbum vel exhortationis vel increpationis longius trahimus, auditorem [Col.0912A] nostrum ad fastidium perducamus. Unde idem praedicator egregius Hebraeis loquitur, dicens: Obsecro vos, fratres, ut sufferatis verbum solatii, etenim perpaucis scripsi vobis (Hebr. XIII, 22). Hoc tamen infirmis praecipue congruit, ut pauca quidem, et quae praevalent capere, audiant, sed quae eorum mentem in poenitentiae dolorem compungant. Nam si eis uno in tempore exhortationis sermo fuerit multipliciter dictus, quia multa retinere non valent, simul amittunt omnia. Unde et medici corporum pannos quos infirmantibus stomachis ponunt, apto quidem medicamine, sed subtiliter liniunt, ne si repleti multo medicamine fuerint, infirmitatem stomachi non roborantes adjuvent, sed opprimentes gravent. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Pope Leo, cf. Augustine, *Sermones supposititios...Sermones de Tempore*, 148.2 (PL 39:2033): Plena sunt omnia periculis, plena omnia laqueis; incitant cupiditates, insidiantur illecebrae; blandiuntur lucra, damna deterrent: amarae sunt obloquentium linguae. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. *Fasciculus morum* 1.4 (pp. 46-47): Secundo considerandum est de superbia oris, que in tribus specialiter consistit, scilicet in multiloquio, in vaniloquio, in maliloquio. Primum enim cavendum est, quia sicud ubi multum est de palea et parum de grano .... Nam ut dicitur Ecclesiastici 20 cpkitulo: “Quki multis verbis utitur, ledit animam suam,” quia in multiloquio non deerit peccatum. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. *Fasciculus morum* 1.4 (pp. 46-47): Secundo vaniloquium est cavendum ne forte per hoc labatur in peiora, quia qui spernit modica paulatim decidat. ... et tamen quod dolendum est iuxta Psalmistam, “vana locuti sunt,” etc. Caveant ergo tales quia ut habetur Matthei 12: “De omni verbo ocioso quod locuti fuerint, homines reddent racionem.” Intollerabile utique foret preposito qui per multa tempora servierat domino, si in ultimo die sue deposicionis de minimo grano responderet et necessario. Quanto magis difficile erit in die iudicii de minimo verbo ocioso Deo reddere racionem. Unde illud Iob 40: “Que brevitrer locutus sum, respondere quid possum?” quasi dicat, nescio. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. *Fasciculus morum* 1.4 (pp. 46-49): Tercio cavendum est de maliloquio, quia iuxta Apostolum Corinthiorum, “corrumpunt bonos mores colloquia mala.” ... Et ideo ad designandum quod bene deberet custodiri, posita est quasi in carcere et murus dencium ante eam atque labia pro antemuralibus. Ephesiorum 4 dicitur: “Omnis sermo malus non procedat de ore vestro.” Unde bene Anglice dicitur:

Se and here and holde ϸe stylle,

ȝefe ϸou wolte lyue and haue ϸy wylle. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. *Vitae* Patrum 4.7 (PL 73:865): Dicebant de abbate Agathone: Quia per triennium lapidem in ore suo mittebat, donec taciturnitatem disceret. ... [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum* 2.36 (Wright p. 150): Libet autem referre et ostrei successum. Juxta

pascua autem maritima erat avis marina quae cotidie

certis indiciis accessum maris sive refluxum praedicere

consuevit. Clamorem igitur ipsius oves juxta litus

maris pascentes agnovere, et certis horis ad locum

eminentem confugere solebant. Accidit autem ut avis

dicta ostreum testas reserans juxta litus reperiret,

quo cum vesci appeteret, testas claudens ostreum avis

rostrum intercepit. Unde nec gregem ovium solito

modo praemunivit. Cursus itaque sui mare non im-

memor, gregem ovium submersit, successusque ostrei

in perniciem ovium cessit. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 11 ex cap. 5.22 (PG 56:691): Si enim vasa sanctificata ad privatos usus transferre peccatum est et periculu, sicut docet nos Balthasar, qui bibens in calicibus sacratis de regno depositus est, et de vita (Dan. 5): si ergo haec vasa sanctificata ad privatos usus transferre sic periculosum est.... [↑](#endnote-ref-19)