[26] To Accuse (*Arguere*)

Man accuses, God accuses, but man only in the present, God in truth in the present and in the future. Therefore, man sometimes accuses himself or his neighbor. Himself certainly in confession so that here he may be cleansed. For the foolish man either defends his fault here or hides it just as the mouse-catcher[[1]](#endnote-1) who covers over his stinking substance. And just as the wolf who covers his tracks in the snow lest he be perceived. But the just man accuses himself here, but Prov. 18[:17]: “The just is first accuser of himself.” And the just man says well, for when the thief brings down his theft on another, if the other is evil immediately he admits it, and draws back. If indeed the just man immediately rejects it and recalls himself and informs on the deed of his neighbor, and thus he saves his own life.

¶ In this way, when the devil suggests evil and brings it to the mind of a man, if the man is evil he admits it and cultivates it, then after a while . . . 4 Kings 7[:9]: “If we hold our peace,” that is, if we do not wish to confess, “we shall be charged with a crime.” But the just man brings that forward and cries out what is well figured, Deut. 22[:24-25], where a man’s betrothed corrupted by another in the city was stoned if she did not cry out, but if she did cry out, she was saved. Thus, whoever falls by sinning, if he does not cry out by confessing, he will be damned. If he does call out by accusing himself, he will be saved, Job 13[:15-16]: “I will reprove my ways in his sight, and he shall be my savior.” Therefore, it is said in Eph. 5[:11]: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Again, sometimes man accuses for Christ. But if he is not his superior nor has he jurisdiction over him, then he ought to correct him amicably and fraternally in secret, first between the one and the other, only according to the form handed down, Matt. 18[:15]: “If your brother shall offend against you, go, and rebuke him,” etc. Nor object fault against fault, because Prov. 13[:18]: “He that yields to reproof, shall be glorified.” But just as there in [Prov. 13:1] it is said, “He that is a scorner, hears not when he is reproved.”

Wherefore, it is evident that Abner son of Ner acted irrationally when he was indignant against Isboseth and handed over the tribe of Benjamin to their enemy David because he accused him when he entered to the concubine of his father Saul, 2 Kings 3[:8]. And thus, it is evident what Prov. 9[:7] says, “He that rebukes a wicked man, gets himself a blot.” If, however, someone has jurisdiction and care over his neighbor, he ought to accuse him according to the form handed down by the Apostle and by the teachers of the Church.

Wherefore, it is said in Tit. 2[:15]: “Rebuke with all authority.” And to [1] Tim. 5[:20]: “Them that sin reprove before all, that the rest also may be afraid.” And to [2] Tim. 4[:2]: “Reprove, entreat, rebuke,” etc. So that, namely, if he sins publicly, let him be accused publicly, Lev. 19[:17]: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but reprove him openly, lest you incur sin through him.” Sometimes private things are to be accused privately according to that of the Psal. [49:21]. Matt. 18[:15]: “But if your brother shall offend against you,” etc.

Wherefore, note that those things which pertain to the measure of accusing are expressed through the order, Heb. 1[:5], where the Lord says to David about Salomon his son, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.” He who has brought up something unbalanced, “I will correct him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men,” [2 Kings 7:14]. However, I ought not to remove my mercy from him where first it was shown, because correction ought to be paternal and proceed from love. Where the Apostle to the Heb. 12[:7]: “What son is there, whom the father does not correct?” Wherefore Bernard,[[2]](#endnote-2) “the superiors hear this, who always want to be formidable to their underlings. Learn how you ought to be mothers of sons, not lords; study how to be more biting, which I would fear. But if sometimes the work is severe, let it be paternal, not tyrannical.” Therefore, the aforesaid things are to be put first in your authority, “I will be to him a Father,” [Heb. 1:5].

The second way of accusing is placed there, if one has brought up something unbalanced, he ought to be the only way and occasion of correction. For if he is not infirm, there is no work for medicine. Therefore, Pliny the Younger says,[[3]](#endnote-3) the wise man pursues vices not men. On account of this Gregory says in his *Cura pastoralis,[[4]](#endnote-4)* “the ruler should in humility be the comrade of those who lead good lives, but stern with the vices of evil-doers.”

The third form is placed there, for I accuse first rationally so that the aforesaid is over and according to the form handed down, [2] Tim. 4[:2]: “Rebuke in all patience and doctrine.” Wherefore Bernard in *Sermone de Joanne Baptiste*,[[5]](#endnote-5) says that John accused Herod over incest.

¶ Again, it follows in the aforesaid authority that correction ought to take place mercifully and not cruelly. Therefore, he says “with the rod of men,” [2 Kings 7:14]. The rod of devotion is hard because it is not intended unless for penitence and affliction, not correction. But the superior ought to attend to correction with the rod of his castigation. Wherefore the Lord commanded Moses when he set him over Egypt, [Exod. 4:17]: “Take this rod in your hand, wherewith you shall do the signs.” For, because man is corrected, he cannot be understood, unless through the signs of correction in the subject. For Pharaoh spoke through a sign is a good argument in customs.

¶ Third, correction ought to happen usefully which is noted there “with the stripes of the children of men,” [2 Kings 7:14]. With one festering in the flesh, he is not better healed than through a moderate whipping, “According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be,” Deut. 25[:2]. Therefore, Christ says, Luke 12[:47]: “Who knew the will of his lord, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Finally the end of correction treated there does not take away my mercy from him. Blessed Gregory, in his *Cura pastoralis,[[6]](#endnote-6)* says that God therefore permits the prince of the apostles to fall so that he may learn through this how he ought to have mercy for others. Therefore, it is said in Ps. [88:15-16]: “Mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know jubilation.”

Again, Christ in Matt. [9:12]: “Go then and learn what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” It is read in the *Vitae patrum[[7]](#endnote-7)* concerning one who was tempted and through a certain old one to whom he confessed desperately how another man improved with a light warning, but through his prayers, there was no temptation and return to the old prior.

¶ Wherefore, it is to be noted that he who ought sometimes accuse ought to have three things in himself, because he himself is an enemy to him, because he reprehends him, and thus he should be fervid and benignant.

¶ Concerning the first, Isidore, *De summum bonum*, book 3, chapter 3,[[8]](#endnote-8) one ought not to correct another’s vices who yet labors under the infection of vices. And Gregory, *Moralia*,[[9]](#endnote-9) those are able rightly to reprove things that are false, who are not taught to do things that are false.

¶ Concerning the second, Eli the priest was condemned for the evil of his sons. For, although they warned them lukewarmly, however not rigorously, as was necessary [1 Kings 4:11, 18].

¶ Concerning the third, Augustine, in *Sermone Domini in monte*, c. 18,[[10]](#endnote-10) the chiding sounds terribly [outside], but inside it is held to be a love of softness. The example, Gen. [42:24], in Joseph who spoke more fearfully on the outside to his brothers formerly transgressing, “And he turned himself away a little while, and wept.”

¶ In the third place, note[[11]](#endnote-11) that God accuses in the present and in the future.

¶ And first, in the present as he corrects in the Apo. 3[:19]: “Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise.” And the apostle lashes, however, every son whom he receives.

¶ In the future he accuses the impenitent who earlier wished to be corrected with lashes, Ps. [49:21]: “I will reprove thee, and set before thy face.” Where the *Glossa* says,[[12]](#endnote-12) because earlier you placed your (faults) behind your back, therefore now I will place your foulness before you.

Second, he accuses because the returning were in crimes. If one is an earthly father, namely, he pledged that he would redeem as a son in exile. Again if the son were found wanting as far as exile, much would be accused. But Christ placed the whole earth of his body in the hands of the judges so that he may redeem man. But man yet is slipping back. Therefore deservedly it is to be accused in judgment, John [16:18]: Therefore “when he is come, he will convince the world of sin.”

¶ Third, he accuses because they do not want to believe his teachings, who always have with them a good master. He would be blamed unless he learns well, but Christ always teaches well and taught us through himself and his disciples, and this without the demand of a contribution, Isai. 13[:17]: “I will stir up the Medes against them,” that is, the words of God, the teachers accuse “who shall not seek [silver], nor [desire] gold.” Therefore if we wish to learn well, deservedly we are accused, Job 13[:10]: “He shall reprove you, because in secret you accept his person.”

¶ Fourth, because they wished to go forth under lighter (penalties). If he is very weak he does not wish to give with an experienced medication a few things to the one seeking for his healing, that he would be accused. But man is a weak sinner, Psal. [6:3]: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.” The medication is Christ, Osee 6[:2]: “He will cure us.” He himself demands nothing from us or his cure unless a conformation, Job 6[:22]: “Did I say: ‘Bring to me, and give me of your substance?’” as if saying, not until the sinner will have died will his weakness be incurable. Prov. 29[:1]: “The man that with a stiff neck despises him that reproves him, shall suddenly be destroyed, and health shall not follow him.” Therefore, deservedly all such ones are to be accused by the Lord, Ezech. 25[:17]: “I will execute great vengeance upon them, rebuking them in fury.”

1. The cat that buries its fecies. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 23.2 (PL 183.885): Audiant hoc praelati, qui sibi commissis semper volunt esse formidini, utilitati raro. Erudimini, qui judicatis terram. Discite subditorum matres vos esse debere, non dominos; studete magis amari, quam metui: et si interdum severitate opus est, paterna sit, non tyrannica. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Pliny the Younger, *Epistle* 1.10.7 (LCL 55: 32-33): Vitae sanctitas summa; comitas par: insectatur vitia non homines, nec castigat errantes sed emendat. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Regulae Pastoralis* 2.6 (PL 77.34): Sit rector bene agentibus per humilitatem socius, contra delinquentium vitia per zelum justitiae erectus. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Bernard, Cf. Jerome, *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthae* 2 cap. 14:3-4 (PL 26:97): arguit Herodem et Herodiadem, quod illicitas nuptias fecerint, et non liceat, fratre vivente germano, uxorem illius ducere: malens periclitari apud regem, quam propter adulationem esse immemor praeceptorum Dei. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Gregory, *Regulae Pastoralis* 2.5 (PL 77.33): Quod videlicet exhibebat non amittendo fidem, sed extendendo pietatem, ut in se personam infidelium transfigurans, ex semetipso disceret qualiter aliis misereri debuisset, quatenus hoc illis impenderet, quod sibi ipse, si ita esset, impendi recte voluisset. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *Vitae patrum*, 5.5.4 (PL 73:875): Et cum non posset tolerare, egressus est de cella, et eadem via, qua et ille juvenis ad saeculum redibat. Abbas autem Apollo intelligens quod factum erat, occurrit ei. Et accedens ad eum, dixit: Quo vadis? et quae est causa turbationis quae obtinuit te? Ille autem sentiens, quia intellexerit sanctus vir quae ei evenerant, prae verecundia nihil dicebat. Dixit autem ei abbas Apollo: Revertere in cellam tuam, et de caetero agnosce infirmitatem tuam, et habe apud temetipsum; quia aut ignoratus sis a diabolo usque modo, aut contemptus, propter quod nec meruisti secundum viros virtutum habere contra diabolum luctamenta. Quid autem dico luctamenta? qui nec uno die aggressionem ipsius portare potuisti.

   Cf. Gordon Hall Gerould, *The North-English Homily Collection* (Lancaster, PA: New Era Printing Co, 1902), (19) The Uncharitable Hermit (pp. 52-53). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Isidore, *Sententiarum* 3.32.1 (PL 83.704): Non debet vitia aliena corripere, qui adhuc vitiorum contagionibus servit. Improbum est enim arguere quemquam in alio quod adhuc reprehendit in semetipso. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Gregory, *Moralia* 17.11.14 (PL 76.18): Unde sanctus vir amicorum superbiam deprimens, non solum si ita est, verum etiam si ita non est ut protulit, nequaquam se reprehendi posse confidit, quia nimirum illi recte redarguere falsa possunt, qui falsa agere nesciunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Augustine, *Sermo* 88.18.20 (PL 38.549-550): Foris terribiliter personet increpatio; intus lenitatis teneatur dilectio. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Thomae Aquinatis, *Sermones et opuscula* Sermo 3, ed. A. J.-B. Raulx (Paris: Ex typis consociationis Sancti Pauli, 1881), (1:89): Dupliciter arguit Dominus peccatores: in praesenti et in futuro. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. *Glossa ordinaria* Ps. 49:21 (PL 113.918): Statuam contra tuam. (AUG.) Quod post dorsum posuisti, ante faciem ponam. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)