173 Boasting (*Jactancia*)

It proceeds from pride and makes a man to lose the fruit of his works. Example, a tree flowering before its time does not yield fruit well, Isai. 17[:11]: “In the morning your seed shall flourish.”

Again, a tree peeled of its bark does not yield fruit well but languishes, so also a man stripped of his works, 4 Kings 20[:13-15], King Ezekias exhibited to the messengers of the Babylonians by way of showing off his treasures which afterwards were all lost.

Again, he who claims that he carries his treasure can quickly be robbed. Wherefore Gregory in a homily,[[1]](#endnote-1) says he desires to be robbed who carries his treasure publicly along the road. The example of the young hen however having laid her egg proclaims to everyone immediately and thus she loses it. [2] John 1[:8]: “Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought.” Therefore Nabugodonosor after he extended himself by boasting, “Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built … a voice came down from heaven … Your kingdom shall pass from you, and they shall cast you out from among men,” etc., Dan. 4[:27-29].

¶ Again, they who boast on earth it will not yield fruit unless it is hidden. Therefore it is said in John [12:25], He that loses his life shall find it, that is, who hides his works, namely, again Isai. 18[:5-6]: “For before the harvest it was all flourishing,” and it follows, “and the sprigs thereof shall be cut off … And they shall be left together to the birds of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth.” So it is concerning those showing themselves through boasting, Isai. 16[:6]: “His pride and his arrogance … more than his strength.” Wherefore Isidore, *De summo bono*, book 3, chapter 23,[[2]](#endnote-2) Look around you and you will find nothing in which you may boast except the sin of boasting. In good works Christ teaches us what to avoid, Matt. 6[:2]: “When thou do an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before you.” Therefore, Quintilian said,[[3]](#endnote-3) it is an odious matter to become boastful, for it is distasteful to the listeners, also hateful. Speaking through boasting has numbered the people of God. Therefore the option is given to them in three matters, 2 Kings 24[:11].

Again, Levit. 1[:16], it is commanded that for the sacrifice the feathers of the bird and crop of the lung should be cast aside and thrown “in the place where the ashes” are wont to be poured out. Because those things on account of which this seems to be elevated into pride ought to be thrust back to the memory of incineration. Wherefore Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, liber 2, chapter 19,[[4]](#endnote-4) it is especially to be noticed that not only in the splendor of bodily matters, but also in these lamentable squalors there can be boasting and therefore it is more dangerous for one to deceive God under the name of servitude.

1. Gregory, *Homiliarum in Evangelia* 11.1 (PL 76:1115): Depraedari ergo desiderat, qui [Col.1115B] thesaurum publice portat in via. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Isidore, *Sentintiae* 3.23.2 (PL 83:697): Circumspice temetipsum, homo, nihilque tibi arroges, quae in te sunt praeter peccatum. Circumspice temetipsum, homo, nihilque tibi arroges, quae in te sunt praeter peccatum. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Quintillian, *The Orator’s Education* 11.1.15-16 (LCL 494:16-17): In primis igitur omnis sui vitiosa iactatio est, eloquentiae tamen in oratore praecipue, adfertque audientibus non fastidium modo sed plerumque etiam odium.

First of all, then, any boasting about oneself is wrong, but an orator’s boasting of his own eloquence is especially wrong. It not only bores the hearers but generally also disgusts them. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *De Sermone domini in monte* 2.41 (PL 34:1287): In hoc autem capitulo maxime animadvertendum est, non in solo rerum corporearum nitore atque pompa, sed etiam in ipsis sordibus luctuosis esse posse jactantiam; et eo periculosiorem, quo sub nomine servitutis Dei decipit. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)