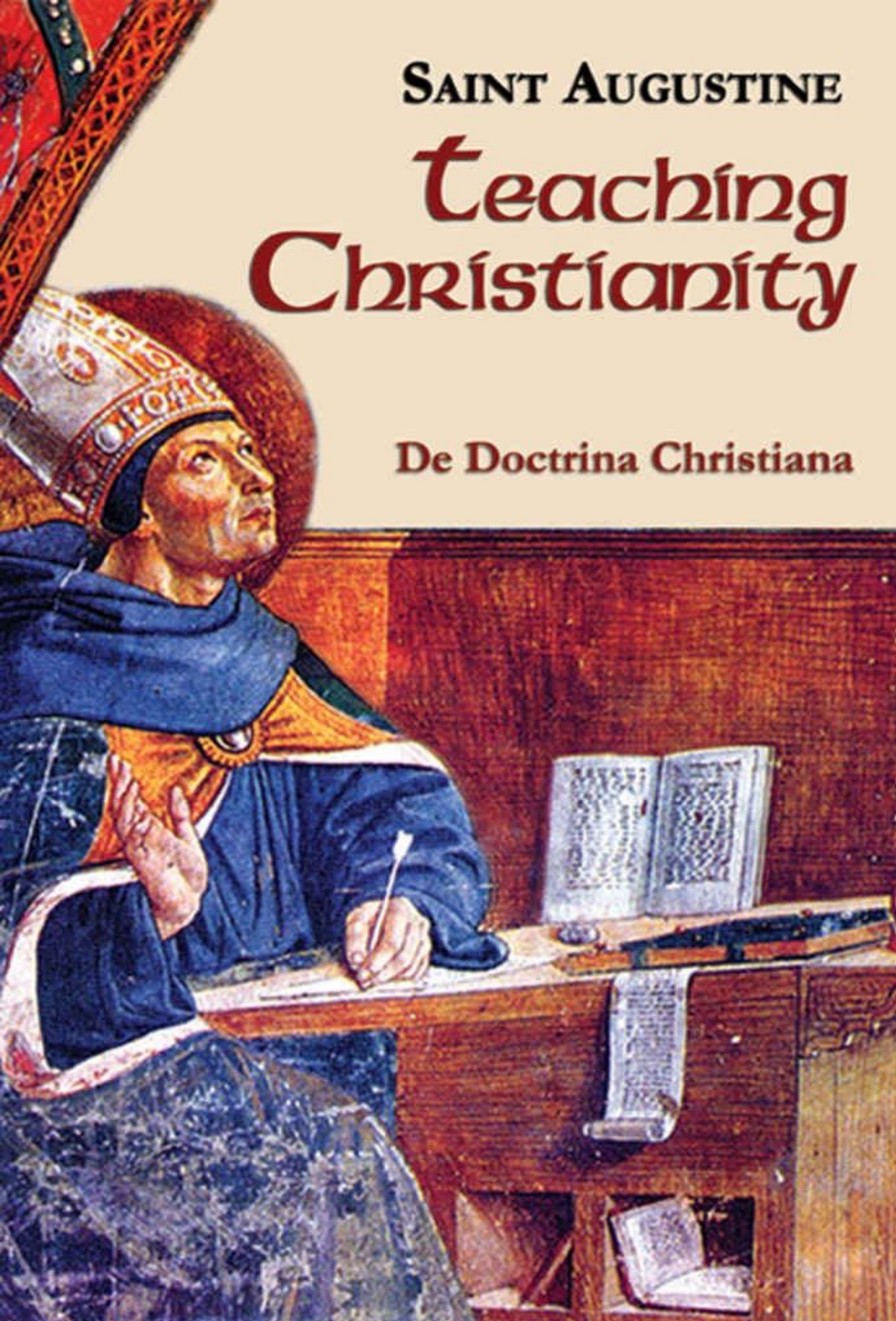


**SAINT AUGUSTINE**

# Teaching Christianity

**De Doctrina Christiana**



THE WORKS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE  
A TRANSLATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Teaching Christianity

*(De Doctrina Christiana)*

I/11

*TRANSLATION AND NOTES BY*

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## Book I

*The purpose of scripture study is both to discover its meaning and to pass it on to others; both tasks to be undertaken with God's help*

1, 1. There are two things which all treatment of the scriptures is aiming at: a way to discover what needs to be understood, and a way to put across to others what has been understood. Let us first discuss the way of discovery, and after that the way of putting our discoveries across.<sup>[1]</sup> A great and arduous work, and if it is difficult to keep up, I am afraid it may be thought rash to have undertaken it. And so it certainly would have been, had I been relying solely on my own powers; but as it is, my hopes of carrying this work through rest in the one from whom, in my reflections, I have already received many ideas on this matter; and so there need be no fear that he will refrain from giving me the rest, when I begin spending on others what I have already been given. Every kind of thing, you see, which does not decrease when it is given away, is not yet possessed as it ought to be, while it is held onto without also being given out to others. Now he said himself, *Whoever has shall be given more* (Mk 4:25). So he will give to those who have; that is, for those who make generous use of what they have received he will complete what he has given, and heap even more upon them.

Those loaves were five and seven in number, before they started being given to the hungry crowds; but when that began to happen, they filled hampers and baskets after satisfying so many thousands of people.<sup>[2]</sup> So just as that bread increased in quantity when it was broken, in the same way all the things the Lord has already granted me for setting about this work will be multiplied under his inspiration, when I start passing them on to others. And thus not only will I not experience any lack of means in this ministry of

mine, but on the contrary I shall even rejoice in a marvelous surplus.

*The difference between things and signs*

2, 2. All teaching is either about things or signs; but things are learned about through signs. What I have now called things, though, in the strict sense, are those that are not mentioned in order to signify something, such as wood, a stone, an animal, and other things like that. Not, however, that piece of wood which we read of Moses throwing into the bitter water to remove its bitterness; nor that stone which Jacob placed under his head; nor that animal which Abraham sacrificed instead of his son.<sup>[3]</sup> All these, in fact, are things in such a way as also to be signs of other things. There are, however, other signs which are only used for signifying, such as words. Nobody, after all, uses words except for the sake of signifying something.

From this it will be easy to understand what I am calling signs; those things, that is, which are used in order to signify something else. Thus every sign is also a thing, because if it is not a thing at all then it is simply nothing. But not every single thing is also a sign. And therefore, in this distinction between things and signs, when we are speaking of things let us so speak that even if some of them can be employed to signify, this will not prevent us from dividing up the work in such a way, that we first discuss things, later on signs; and let us bear in mind all the time that what has to be considered about things is that they are, not that they signify something else besides themselves.

*The division of things; what is meant by enjoying and using*

3, 3. So then, there are some things which are meant to be enjoyed, others which are meant to be used, yet others which do both the enjoying and the using. Things that are to be enjoyed make us happy; things which are to be used help

us on our way to happiness, providing us, so to say, with crutches and props for reaching the things that will make us happy, and enabling us to keep them.

We ourselves, however, both enjoy and use things, and find ourselves in the middle, in a position to choose which to do. So if we wish to enjoy things that are meant to be used, we are impeding our own progress, and sometimes are also deflected from our course, because we are thereby delayed in obtaining what we should be enjoying, or turned back from it altogether, blocked by our love for inferior things.

4, 4. Enjoyment, after all, consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining, provided, that is, it deserves to be loved. Because unlawful use, surely, should rather be termed abuse or misuse. Supposing then we were exiles in a foreign land, and could only live happily in our own country, and that being unhappy in exile we longed to put an end to our unhappiness and to return to our own country, we would of course need land vehicles or sea-going vessels, which we would have to make use of in order to be able to reach our own country, where we could find true enjoyment. And then suppose we were delighted with the pleasures of the journey, and with the very experience of being conveyed in carriages or ships, and that we were converted to enjoying what we ought to have been using, and were unwilling to finish the journey quickly, and that by being perversely captivated by such agreeable experiences we lost interest in our own country, where alone we could find real happiness in its agreeable familiarity. Well that's how it is in this mortal life in which we are exiles *away from the Lord* (2 Cor 5:6); if we wish to return to our home country, where alone we can be truly happy, we have to use this world, not enjoy it,<sup>[4]</sup> so that we may behold *the invisible things of God, brought to our knowledge through the things that have been made* (Rom

1:20); that is, so that we may proceed from temporal and bodily things to grasp those that are eternal and spiritual.

*God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the ultimate thing to be enjoyed; but he is inexpressible*

5, 5. The things therefore that are to be enjoyed are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in fact the Trinity, one supreme thing, and one which is shared in common by all who enjoy it; if, that is to say, it is a thing, and not the cause of all things; if indeed it is a cause.<sup>[5]</sup> It is not easy, after all, to find any name that will really fit such transcendent majesty. In fact it is better just to say that this Trinity is the one God *from whom are all things, through whom all things, in whom all things* (Rom 11:36). Thus Father and Son and Holy Spirit are both each one of them singly God and all together one God; and each one of them singly is the complete divine substance, and all together are one substance.

The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son; but the Father is only the Father, and the Son is only the Son, and the Holy Spirit is only the Holy Spirit. The three possess the same eternity, the same unchangeableness, the same greatness, the same power. In the Father unity, in the Son equality, in the Holy Spirit the harmony of unity and equality; and these three are all one because of the Father, are all equal because of the Son, are all linked together because of the Holy Spirit.<sup>[6]</sup>

6, 6. Have I said anything, solemnly uttered anything that is worthy of God? On the contrary, all I feel I have done is to wish to say something; but if I have said anything, it is not what I wished to say. How do I know this? I know it because God is inexpressible; and if what has been said by me were inexpressible, it would not have been said. And from this it follows that God is not to be called inexpressible, because

when even this is said about him, something is being expressed. And we are involved in heaven knows what kind of battle of words, since on the one hand what cannot be said is inexpressible, and on the other what can even be called inexpressible is thereby shown to be not inexpressible. This battle of words should be avoided by keeping silent, rather than resolved by the use of speech.

And yet, while nothing really worthy of God can be said about him, he has accepted the homage of human voices, and has wished us to rejoice in praising him with our words. That in fact is what is meant by calling him God. Not, of course, that with the sound made by this one syllable any knowledge of him is achieved; but still, all those who know the English language<sup>[7]</sup> are moved, when this sound reaches their ears, to reflecting upon some most exalted and immortal nature.

7, 7. When that one God of gods is thought about, after all, even by those people who assume there are other gods whether in heaven or on earth, and who invoke and worship them, he is thought about in such a way that our thoughts strive to attain to something, than which there is nothing better or more sublime.<sup>[8]</sup> People are, of course, moved by a whole variety of goods, some by those which are available to the bodily senses, some by those which the intelligent spirit can attain to. Those who are given over to the senses of the body consider that either the sky, or what they can see shining brightly in the sky, or the universe itself, is God. Or if they exert themselves to go outside the universe, they imagine something full of light, and either make it infinite, or vainly suppose it to have the shape they think best—or even endow it with a human form, if that is the one they prefer to others. But if they do not think there is one God of gods, and assume rather that there are many, indeed countless gods of equal rank, even these they represent to themselves in imagination as being whatever they consider superlative in bodies.

Those on the other hand, who proceed by using their minds to conclude that God is, place him above all visible and bodily natures, also over all intelligible and spiritual ones—over everything in fact that is subject to change. All of them,<sup>91</sup> however, put up a strenuous and zealous fight for God's excelling everything else there is; nor can any be found who suppose that God is something than which anything else is better. And so all agree that God is whatever they put above all other things.



## Notes

- [1]. The way of discovery in Books I—III; the way of putting our discoveries across—that is to say, the art of preaching—in Book IV. This makes it clear from the start that when he completed the work thirty years later, he did not depart in the least from his original plan.
- [2]. See Mk 6:34–44; 8:1–9.
- [3]. See Ex 15:23–25; Gn 28:11–19; 22:9–14. The wood thrown into the water was a sign of the cross healing the world; the stone Jacob rested on, and set up and anointed, was a sign of Christ the cornerstone; the ram Abraham saw caught in the thorn bush and sacrificed in place of Isaac was, like Isaac, a sign of Christ sacrificed on the cross.
- [4]. We must be on our guard against taking Augustine’s stark antitheses too literally. He spent a very large part of his life traveling; and while he undoubtedly felt immense relief whenever he reached his destination, Carthage, or back home in Hippo Regius,

or wherever it was, I am sure he did not refuse to enjoy whatever distractions the journeys offered, if only the conversation of his companions. But he did not make such enjoyments his goal. So here, in telling us only to use the world and not to enjoy it, he is telling us not to make enjoyment of it our goal, our one aim in life. We have to use it in order to reach the perfect joys of our true home country. But he would agree that there is no harm in making the best of our use of the world, and enjoying it when we can.

- [5]. In the ordinary, human sense of cause, or of thing. He is simply advertent to the total inadequacy of all human language when applied to the divine mystery, or at least of all language that is not purely and simply scriptural. But if pressed, he would have agreed that the scriptural terms he goes on to deploy are not adequate either, though they cannot be improved upon.
- [6]. An interesting formula, this last sentence. There is nothing quite like it in his *The Trinity*, attributing specifically distinct but still shared attributes to each of the three persons. It is, we could say, a poetically pleasing formula, but lacking in theological rigor.
- [7]. Of course, Augustine says the Latin language, and talks of the two syllables of the word *Deus*.
- [8]. Is this where Saint Anselm was to get his quasi-definition of God as that than which nothing greater can be thought of?
- [9]. He has in mind, in general, all the old Greek philosophers, from the early pre-Socratics up to the Stoics and Neoplatonists.

## Book IV

*The value of rhetorical skills; but this will not be a textbook of rhetoric*

1, 1. I originally divided this work of ours, which has the title *Teaching Christianity*, into two parts. After the prologue, in which I gave my answer to those who were going to find fault with it, I said, “There are two things which every treatment of the scriptures should strive for: a way of attaining to an understanding of their meaning, and a way of communicating what has been understood. We shall first discuss how to understand them, and next how to communicate their meaning” (Book I, 1). Because we have already said much about ways of understanding them, and have filled three volumes with this one part, we shall now with the Lord’s help say a few things about communication, and so conclude it all, if possible, with one last book, and finish the whole work in four volumes.

2. And so first of all I must preface my remarks by dashing the expectations of any readers, who may think perhaps that I am going to give them the rules of rhetoric which I myself learned and taught in the secular schools. I hereby warn them not to expect such things from me, not because they are of no use at all, but because even if they are of some use, they are to be learned elsewhere, if any good man should chance to have the leisure to study this subject too. Only they should not be looked for from me, either in this work or in any other.

2, 3. Rhetoric, after all, being the art of persuading people to accept something, whether it is true or false, would anyone dare to maintain that truth should stand there without any weapons in the hands of its defenders against falsehood; that those speakers, that is to say, who are trying to convince their hearers of what is untrue, should know how to get them

on their side, to gain their attention and have them eating out of their hands by their opening remarks,<sup>[1]</sup> while these who are defending the truth should not? That those should utter their lies briefly, clearly, plausibly, and these should state their truths in a manner too boring to listen to, too obscure to understand, and finally too repellent to believe? That those should attack the truth with specious arguments, and assert falsehoods, while these should be incapable of either defending the truth or refuting falsehood? That those, to move and force the minds of their hearers into error, should be able by their style to terrify them, move them to tears, make them laugh, give them rousing encouragement, while these on behalf of truth stumble along slow, cold and half asleep?

Could anyone be so silly as to suppose such a thing? <sup>[2]</sup> So since facilities are available for learning to speak well, which is of the greatest value in leading people either along straight or along crooked ways, why should good men not study to acquire the art, so that it may fight for the truth, if bad men can prostitute it to the winning of their vain and misguided cases in the service of iniquity and error?

3, 4. But be that as it may, whatever the rules whose observance makes for what is called fluency and eloquence, when habitually applied by a skillful tongue in its choice of a wide and colorful vocabulary, they should be learned apart from what I am writing here, in the proper time and place set aside for such work, and at the most suitable age, by those who can learn them quickly. For even the leading lights of Roman eloquence did not hesitate to say that unless you can master this art quickly, you can never master it at all. Whether this is true or not, what need is there for us to decide? For even if they could eventually be mastered by the slower spirits, we do not consider them of such importance that we would wish to impose the learning of them upon men of mature or even venerable age. It is enough that this subject

should be the concern of the young, and not even of all of those whom we desire to have educated for the service of the Church, but only of those who are not yet busy with more urgent requirements, which undoubtedly take precedence over this one.<sup>[3]</sup>

The fact is that, given a bright and eager disposition, eloquence will come more readily to those who read and listen to eloquent speakers than to those who pore over the rules of eloquence. Nor is there any lack of ecclesiastical writers, over and above the canon of scripture that has been set for our salvation at the summit of authority, by whose style a capable man will be influenced when he reads them, even if that is not his concern, but he is only interested in what they have to say; and he will put this to good use when he has occasion to write, or dictate, or finally even to preach what he has in mind that accords with piety and the rule of faith.

But if such a disposition is lacking, then these rules of rhetoric cannot be grasped; or even if they can be to some extent and with great effort impressed on a person and understood, they will not be of any use, seeing that those who have learned them and are fluent and attractive speakers cannot all think about them, in order to speak in accordance with them, while they are speaking, unless they are actually discussing them. Indeed I imagine that there are scarcely any of them who can do both at the same time, that is speak well, and in order to do this think about those rules for public speaking while they are speaking. You would have to take care, after all, not to let what you had to say escape your mind, while you were giving all your attention to saying it artistically. And yet in the speeches and the style of eloquent speakers you will find that the rules of eloquence have been implemented, which they were not thinking about either in order to speak, or while they were speaking, and this whether they had learned them formally, or never even encountered

them. They implement them because they are eloquent, they do not apply them in order to be eloquent.

5. So then, infants only become speakers by learning the speech and pronunciation of speakers; why cannot people become eloquent without any formal training in the art of public speaking, but simply by reading and hearing the speeches of the eloquent and, as far as they have the chance to follow this up, by imitating them? Why, we have surely all experienced examples of this, have we not? I mean, we know a great many people, quite innocent of the rules of rhetoric, who are much more eloquent than a great many people that have learned them; but we don't know anybody like this who has not read and heard the debates and the style of eloquent speakers.

Even the art of grammar, after all, in which we learn about correctness of speech, would not need to be taught to boys, if they had the good fortune to grow up and live among people who spoke correctly. That is to say, without knowing any of the names of grammatical faults, their own sound habits of speech would enable them to point out and avoid faulty grammar on the lips of any speaker, in the way townspeople, even though illiterate, will find fault with the speech of rustics.

4, 6. The interpreter and teacher of the divine scriptures, therefore, the defender of right faith and the hammer of error, has the duty of both teaching what is good and unteaching what is bad; and in this task of speaking it is his duty to win over the hostile, to stir up the slack, to point out to the ignorant what is at stake and what they ought to be looking for. When, though, he finds them friendly, attentive, willing to learn, or renders them so himself, further tactics have to be employed, as the case requires. If the listeners need to be instructed, this calls for the narrative style, provided, at least, that they need to be informed about the subject being dealt with, while for the clearing up of doubts and the

establishment of certainty, reasoned arguments and documentary proofs are needed.<sup>[4]</sup>

But if the listeners are to be moved rather than instructed, so as not to become sluggish in acting upon what they know, and so as to give a real assent to things they admit are true, more forceful kinds of speaking are called for. Here what is necessary is words that implore, that rebuke, that stir, that check, and whatever other styles may avail to move the audience's minds and spirits. And in fact practically nobody, when it comes to public speaking, neglects doing the things I have said.

5, 7.<sup>[5]</sup> Some people, of course, do it all in a dull, unattractive and cold sort of way, while others do it with wit, elegance and feeling. In any case, those who can speak and discuss things wisely, even though they cannot do so eloquently, must now undertake the task we are concerned with<sup>[6]</sup> in such a way as to benefit their listeners, even though less than they would have benefited them if they could also speak eloquently. Beware, on the other hand, of those whose unwisdom has a flood of eloquence at its command, and all the more so, the more their audience takes pleasure in things it is profitless to hear, and assumes that because they hear them speaking fluently, they are also speaking the truth. This consideration did not even escape those who thought the art of rhetoric was worth teaching; for they admitted that "wisdom without eloquence is of little use to society, while eloquence without wisdom is frequently extremely prejudicial to it, never of any use."<sup>[7]</sup> If those therefore who have propounded the rules of eloquence have been obliged, in the very books in which they have done this, to make such a confession at the instigation of truth, even though they were ignorant of the true, that is to say the heavenly, wisdom which *comes down from the Father of lights* (Jas 1:17); how much more ought we to have no other opinion, seeing that we are sons and ministers of this wisdom?

Now a person is all the more or the less able to speak wisely, the more or the less progress he has made in the holy scriptures. I don't mean just in reading them frequently and committing them to memory, but in understanding them well and diligently exploring their senses. There are people, after all, who read them and neglect them—read them in order to have them at their finger tips, neglect trying to understand them. Unquestionably far and away to be preferred to these are people who do not have their words at their finger tips, but can see into the heart of them with the eyes of their own hearts. But better than either is the man who can both quote them at will and understand them as they deserve.

8. For the man, therefore, who has the duty of saying wisely even what he cannot say eloquently, it is supremely necessary that he should have the words of the scriptures at his finger tips.<sup>[8]</sup> For the poorer he perceives himself to be in his own words, the richer it behooves him to be in those of scripture. In this way he can prove what he says in his own words from the words of scripture, and what carried less weight said in his own words<sup>[9]</sup> can somehow or other grow weightier with the support of that greater testimony. For though he may not be so good at pleasing his audience by the way he states his point, he will please them by proving it.

There is the man, on the other hand, who wishes to speak not only wisely but eloquently, since he will surely be of more use if he can do both. Him I much prefer to send off to read or listen to eloquent speakers and to practice imitating them, rather than instructing him to devote his time to teachers of the art of rhetoric, provided, that is, that those whom he reads or listens to are genuinely and reliably renowned for having spoken, or for speaking, wisely as well as eloquently. Those, you see, who speak eloquently are listened to with pleasure, those who speak wisely, with wholesome profit. That is why scripture does not say, “A multitude of eloquent men” but *A multitude of wise men is*



*the health of the world* (Wis 6:24). Now just as bitter but wholesome things often have to be taken, so pernicious sweet things have to be shunned. But what could be better than the pleasantly wholesome, or the wholesomely pleasant? The more eagerly, after all, what pleases is sought here, the easier it is for what is wholesome to be imparted. There are, then, churchmen who have commented on the divine utterances not only wisely but also eloquently;<sup>[10]</sup> it is more a matter of there not being time enough to read them than of their not being available to those who have the will and the leisure to do so.

*Examples of eloquent wisdom from biblical authors: Saint Paul*

6, 9. Here, no doubt, someone may ask whether our authors, whose divinely inspired writings have provided us with a canon of the most salutary authority, are only to be called wise, or also eloquent. This is indeed a question that it is the easiest thing in the world for me to answer, and for those who agree with what I say in this matter. The fact is that where I understand these authors, it seems to me that not only could there be nothing wiser, but also nothing more eloquent. And I make bold to say that all who rightly understand what these authors are saying also thereby understand that they could not and should not have said it in the least differently. For just as one sort of eloquence goes with youth, while another suits riper years—and it should not in fact be called eloquence if it does not match the person of the speaker—so too there is a kind that becomes men thought worthy of the highest authority and in fact of being called divine. This is the style in which they spoke, and no other becomes them, nor does this one become any other persons. With them it accords perfectly, whereas the more lowly it appears, the higher does it soar above other writers, not by any kind of windiness, but by its very solidity.

Where, however, I do not understand them, their eloquence is indeed less apparent to me, but I do not doubt that it is of the same quality as where I do understand. It was also right for this obscurity of the divine and saving utterances to be mixed in with such clear eloquence, because in order for us to make progress in our understanding we need the mental exercise of wrestling with the text as well as the intellectual satisfaction of discovering what it means.<sup>[11]</sup>

10. Here are these people, rating their style above the style of our authors because it is more inflated, not because it is grander; well, I could show them all the strengths and graces of eloquence, on which they so preen themselves, in the sacred writings of those authors, whom divine providence has provided us with, to instruct us and transfer us from this crooked age into one of blessedness.<sup>[12]</sup> But it is not what these men have in common with the orators or poets of the Gentiles that delights me more than I can say in their style of eloquence. What really amazes and astonishes me is that through another kind of eloquence of their own they employed this eloquence of ours<sup>[13]</sup> in such a way that it was neither lacking nor obtrusive in their writings, because it was important that it should be neither rejected nor paraded by them. The first would be true if they avoided it altogether, the second could be thought to be the case, if it was too easily recognized in their writings. And in those passages where it can perhaps be detected by the learned, such things are being said that the words they are said with seem to spring spontaneously from the subject matter, rather than to be contributed by the writer, so that you could almost imagine wisdom stepping out from her own house, that is from the breast of the wise man, followed by eloquence as her inseparable, even if uninvited, lady in waiting.

7, 11. Could anybody fail to see, for example, what the apostle was wishing to say here, and how wisely he said it: *We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation results in*

*patience, patience in approbation, approbation in hope, while hope does not confound, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* (Rom 5:3–5)? Were any inexpert expert, if I may so put it, to maintain that here the apostle was observing the rules of the art of rhetoric, would he not be laughed out of court by Christians both learned and unlearned? And yet one can here observe the figure of speech which in Greek is called *klimax*, while in Latin some people called it *gradatio*, because they were unwilling to say “ladder”; when words or meanings are linked together, one being spun from another, as here we can see patience spun from tribulation, approbation from patience, hope from approbation.

There is also another embellishment to be observed, that after some phrases, each terminated by a pause,<sup>[14]</sup> which our people call “clauses” or just “phrases,” while the Greeks call them *kolons* and *kommata*, there follows a round or circuit, which they call a *periodos*, whose clauses are held in suspense by the voice of the speaker, until it ends with the last of them. Thus the first of the clauses that precede the period<sup>[15]</sup> is *that tribulation results in patience*, the second is *patience in approbation*, the third *approbation in hope*. Then the period is joined on, consisting of three clauses, of which the first is *while hope does not confound*, the second *because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*, the third *through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us*. Now this is the sort of thing that is taught in courses on the art of eloquence. So while we are not saying that the apostle deliberately observed the rules of eloquence, we are still not denying that eloquence waited upon his wisdom.

12. Writing to the Corinthians in the second letter, he confuted certain people, who were pseudo-apostles from the Jews, and were slighting him; and because he is obliged to blow his own trumpet, he puts this down to himself as folly

—and how wisely he says it, and how eloquently! But he does it as the companion of wisdom, the leader of eloquence, following the former, going ahead of the latter, and not spurning her as she follows: *Again I say it, he declares, let nobody take me for a fool; or else accept me as a fool, so that I too may do a little boasting. In what I have to say I am not speaking according to God, but as in a fit of folly, in this serious matter of boasting. Since many, indeed, are boasting according to the flesh, I too will boast. For you suffer fools gladly, being so wise yourselves. For you put up with it if anyone reduces you to slavery, if anyone swallows you up, if anyone takes you in, if anyone pushes himself forward, if anyone slaps you in the face. I am speaking in an ignoble way, as though we too have grown weak. But in whatever respect anyone puts on a bold face—I speak in folly—I do so too. Are they Hebrews? I am too. Are they Israelites? I am too. Are they the seed of Abraham? I am too. Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool—I am more so. In labors endlessly, in prisons more frequently, in beatings beyond measure, at the point of death more often. From the Jews five times have I received forty strokes less one. Three times have I been beaten with rods, once I have been stoned, three times shipwrecked. I have been a night and a day in the depth of the sea. Often on journeys in danger of rivers, in danger of robbers, in danger from my kin, in danger from the nations, in danger in the city, in danger in the wild, in danger in the sea, in danger among false brethren; in toil and distress, too often going without sleep, in hunger and thirst, too often fasting, in cold and nakedness; apart from those outward matters, the daily assault on me, my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weakening, and I do not feel weak? Who is being scandalized, and I am not on fire? If boasting is required, I will boast about what concerns my weakness (2 Cor 11:16–30).* Wide-awake readers can see with what wisdom all this is said; with what a flow of

eloquence it all runs will be noticed even by someone who is snoring.

13. In fact, though, anyone who knows about it will acknowledge that these phrases which the Greeks call *kommata*, and the clauses and periods which I discussed a short while ago, being woven together with the most seemly variety, are what constitute the whole beauty of this passage, and its very countenance as it were, which moves and delights even the unlearned. Thus at the point where I began to insert this passage, there are some periods. The first is the smallest, consisting of two clauses; periods, you see, cannot have fewer than two clauses, though they can have more. So this was the first: *Again I say it, let nobody take me for a fool.* There follows another of three clauses: *Or else, accept me as a fool, so that I too may do a little boasting.*<sup>[16]</sup> The one that follows in the third place has four members: *In what I have to say, I am not speaking according to God, but as in a fit of folly, in this serious matter of boasting.* The fourth has two: *Since many indeed are boasting according to the flesh, I too will boast.* And the fifth has two: *For you suffer fools gladly, being so wise yourselves.* The sixth also is of two clauses: *For you put up with it, if anyone reduces you to slavery.*<sup>[17]</sup>

There follow three phrases: *If anyone swallows you up, if anyone takes you in, if anyone pushes himself forward.* Then three clauses: *If anyone slaps you in the face, I am speaking in an ignoble way, as though we too have grown weak.* A three-clause period is added: *But in whatever respect anyone puts on a bold face—I speak in folly—I do so too.* From this point he now puts three phrases as short questions, and again three phrases in answer: *Are they Hebrews? I am too. Are they Israelites? I am too. Are they the seed of Abraham? I am too.* To the fourth phrase put as a question he replies, not with a counter-phrase, but with a counter-clause: *Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool—I am more*

so. Now the four following phrases tumble out, the question and answer form being very suitably dropped: *In labors endlessly, in prisons more frequently, in beatings beyond measure, at the point of death more often.* Then a brief period is inserted, which has to be divided by a slight pause: *From the Jews five times,* so that that is one clause, to which the next is tied on: *have I received forty strokes less one.* Then there is a return to phrases, and three are put down: *Three times have I been beaten with rods, once I have been stoned, three times shipwrecked.* There follows a single clause: *I have been a night and a day in the depth of the sea.*

Next fourteen phrases come flowing out with a most becoming force: *Often on journeys, in danger of rivers, in danger of robbers, in danger from my kin, in danger from the nations, in danger in the city, in danger in the wild, in danger in the sea, in danger among false brethren; in toil and distress, too often going without sleep, in hunger and thirst, too often fasting, in cold and nakedness.* After that he inserts a three-clause period: *Apart from those outward matters, the daily assault on me, my anxiety for all the churches.* And to this he adds two clauses as rhetorical questions: *Who is weakening, and I do not feel weak? Who is being scandalized, and I am not on fire?* Finally, this whole breathless passage ends with a two-clause period: *If boasting is required, I will boast about what concerns my weakness.*

But it is quite impossible to find words to express how neat and pleasing it is, that after this energetic, forceful flood of words he should somehow come to rest, and bring his hearers to rest in a little narrative that he inserts. He goes on to say, you see, *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever, knows that I am not lying* (2 Cor 11:31). And then he tells very, very briefly how he had been in peril and how he had escaped.

14. It would take too long to go through the rest of the passage, or to demonstrate these things from other places in

the holy scriptures. And what if I had also chosen to point out the figures of speech this art teaches, which are to be found at least in these texts I have quoted to illustrate the apostle's eloquence? <sup>[18]</sup> Would not serious people readily conclude<sup>[19]</sup> that I was going beyond what any student might think sufficient? All these things, when taught by professionals, are highly regarded, are bought at a high price, sold with high-flown self-advertisement. This is the kind of self-advertisement I too fear I may reek of, while I am holding forth like this. But I had to answer those less than learned people who think our authors are to be lightly dismissed, not because they lack, but because they do not parade, the eloquence of which these people are altogether too fond.

#### *Examples from biblical authors: Amos*

15. But perhaps you may think I have chosen the apostle Paul as being our only eloquent writer. Where he says, after all, *Even if unskilled in speaking, but not in knowledge* (2 Cor 11:6), he seems in speaking that way to have been granting his detractors something for the sake of argument, not to have been admitting it as if it were really true. If he had said, "Unskilled indeed in speaking, but not in knowledge," it could only have been understood as meaning what it said. He certainly did not hesitate to claim knowledge, without which he would never have qualified as *teacher of the nations* (1 Tm 2:7). Certainly, if we are offering anything of his as an example of eloquence, we do it, naturally, from those letters which were admitted even by his detractors, who wanted his speech when present in person to be considered beneath contempt, to be *weighty and forceful* (2 Cor 10:10).<sup>[20]</sup>

So I see that I must say something also about the eloquence of the prophets, where many things are veiled under a figurative manner of speech. The more thoroughly

indeed they seem to be wrapped up under metaphorical expressions, the sweeter they taste when they are finally unpacked.<sup>[21]</sup> Here, however, where I quote such a passage, I am not to be required to expound what is said, but only to draw attention to the way it is said. And I will do this most effectively from the book of that prophet who said he was a shepherd or herdsman, and was taken away from that by God and sent to prophesy to God's people. I will not take it, however, from the version of the Seventy translators,<sup>[22]</sup> who were also divinely inspired in their translation, and for that reason appear to have said some things rather differently from the original, in order to encourage the reader to concentrate on searching out the spiritual sense, which is why much of their text is more obscure, because couched in more figurative language. Instead I will quote it as translated from Hebrew into Latin speech by the presbyter Jerome, who was well versed in both languages.

16. So then, when this rustic prophet, or rustic turned prophet, was attacking the godless, the proud, the lovers of luxury, who were thereby utterly neglectful of the demands of brotherly love, he cried out with the words, *Woe to you who are opulent in Sion, and place your trust in the mountain of Samaria, aristocrats, heads of peoples, pompously pacing into the house of Israel! Pass over to Calneh and see, and go from there to Hamath the great; and go down to Gath of the Philistines, and to each of their best kingdoms, if their boundaries are wider than your boundaries. You that have been set apart for the evil day, and are drawing near to the throne of iniquity; who sleep on beds of ivory and sport wantonly on your quilts; who eat lamb from the flock and veal from the midst of the herd; who sing to the voice of the psaltery. They imagined they had instruments of song like David, drinking wine in goblets and smearing themselves with the finest ointments; and they felt nothing for the grinding down of Joseph (Am 6:1–6).*



Would these so-called learned and well-spoken people, who despise our prophets as unlettered men unfamiliar with eloquence, would they really have wished to say that differently, if they had to say anything of the sort to that sort of persons—those of them, that is, who would not have liked to be thought crazy?

17. What more, after all, could sober ears desire than this piece of eloquence? First of all, with what a roar is that invective hurled at, so to say, sleep-sodden senses to make them wake up! *Woe to you who are opulent in Sion, and place your trust in the mountain of Samaria, aristocrats, heads of peoples, pompously pacing into the house of Israel!* Next, to show how ungrateful they were for God's favors in giving them ample lands for their kingdom, since they were placing their trust in the mountain of Samaria, where of course they were worshiping idols, *Pass over, he says, to Calneh and see, and go from there to Hamath the great; and go down to Gath of the Philistines, and to each of their best kingdoms, if their boundaries are wider than your boundaries.* Simultaneously with this point being made, the utterance is decorated with place names as with lights: Sion, Samaria, Calneh, Hamath the great, and Gath of the Philistines. And then the words which are connected to these places have such a nice variety: "are opulent," "place your trust," "pass over," "go," "go down."

18. It goes on to announce that the captivity which is to be experienced under an iniquitous king is drawing near, when it adds, *You that have been set apart for the evil day, and are drawing near to the throne of iniquity.* Then it details the love of luxury that deserved this: *Who sleep on beds of ivory and sport wantonly on your quilts; who eat lamb from the flock and veal from the midst of the herd.* These six clauses have been set out in three two-clause periods. For he did not say, "You that have been set apart for the evil day, you that are drawing near to the throne of

iniquity, you that sleep on beds of ivory, you that sport wantonly on your quilts, you that eat lamb from the flock, you that eat veal from the midst of the herd.” If it were said like that, it would indeed be very fine, with all six clauses flowing along from the one pronominal phrase repeated each time, and each indicated by the reciter’s inflection. But it has turned out much finer, with their being connected to the same pronoun in pairs, and so unfolding themselves in three sentences; one concerned with foretelling the captivity: *You that have been set apart for the evil day, and are drawing near to the throne of iniquity*; the next with lechery: *Who sleep on beds of ivory, and sport wantonly on your quilts*; while the third is concerned with gluttony: *Who eat, he says, lamb from the flock, and veal from the midst of the herd*. Thus it remains the reciter’s choice whether to make six clauses by closing each one, or whether to raise his voice slightly at the first and third and fifth, and by threading the second onto the first, the fourth onto the third and the sixth onto the fifth, to make three of the neatest two-clause periods—one pointing to the imminent catastrophe, the next to the unchaste bed, the third to the wastefully lavish table.

19. Next he savages the self-indulgent pleasure of the ears.<sup>[23]</sup> Now music can be wisely engaged in by the wise; so after saying, *Who sing to the voice of the psaltery*, with a marvelous, beautiful finesse he eased off the violence of his invective, and went on now to speak not to them but about them, as a reminder to us to distinguish between a wise man’s music and that of a self-indulgent man. So he did not say, “who sing to the voice of the psaltery, and imagine you have instruments of song like David”; but first he told them what the self-indulgent needed to hear: *Who sing to the voice of the psaltery*; and then, to point out somehow to others their ignorant vulgarity, he added, *They imagined they had instruments of song like David, drinking wine in goblets, and smearing themselves with the finest ointments*. These three

clauses are best recited if the voice is slightly raised after the first two, and the period is brought to an end by dropping the voice at the third.

20. We come finally to what concludes all this: *And they felt nothing for the grinding down of Joseph*; it can be said in a continuous breath, as one clause, or more elegantly divided by a pause after *and they felt nothing*, and then with this distinction made, rounded off by *for the grinding down of Joseph* as a two-clause period. But in either case, it was an admirably charming touch that he did not say, “And they felt nothing for the grinding down of their brother,” but instead of “their brother” put *Joseph*. In this way you could take any brother at all as being signified by the proper name of that one whose fame stood out among his brethren, whether in the evils he suffered at their hands or in the good he repaid them with.<sup>[24]</sup> Whether indeed this trope, by which we are led to understand any brother you like in Joseph, is propounded in that art of rhetoric which I both learned and taught, I do not know.<sup>[25]</sup> What a beautiful touch it is, though, and how it moves those who read and appreciate it, there is no point in anybody being told, if he cannot perceive it for himself.

21. And there are yet more things indeed, relating to the rules of eloquence, which can be discovered in this very same passage that we have presented as an example. But the good listener will not so much be instructed by its being diligently analyzed as fired by its being passionately recited. It was not, after all, composed by mere human industry, but it poured out as a divine message both wisely and eloquently from the prophet’s mind, its wisdom not being preoccupied with eloquence, but its eloquence not withdrawing from wisdom. For if, as some of the most eloquent and percipient of men have been able to see and have said, things that appear to be learned in the art of oratory would never have been observed and noted down and put into form as this systematic doctrine, unless they had first been there in the

minds and natural capacities of the orators,<sup>[26]</sup> small wonder, surely, if they are there to be found in these men, who were sent by the maker of minds and natural capacities. Accordingly, let us acknowledge that our canonical authors and teachers were indeed eloquent as well as being wise, with the kind of eloquence that befitted persons of that category.

*Further suggestions and advice for preachers*

8, 22. But while we have taken some examples of eloquence from their writings which can be understood without difficulty, we certainly must not think that they are to be imitated by us in those things which they said with a useful and salutary obscurity, to exercise and after a fashion to hone the minds of readers, and to break the fastidious habits<sup>[27]</sup> and whet the appetite of those who are eager to learn, while also casting a veil over<sup>[28]</sup> the minds of the ungodly, whether to prompt their conversion to a more God-fearing frame of mind, or to ensure their exclusion from sacred mysteries. Those prophets did in fact speak in such a way that later generations, who would understand them rightly and expound them, would be able to uncover the other kind of grace, different indeed, but following upon the first kind<sup>[29]</sup> in the Church of God.

Their expositors, therefore, should not speak in the same sort of way, as though putting themselves forward with a similar authority to be expounded; but in all their commentaries and sermons they should first and foremost and supremely work away at being intelligible with what<sup>[30]</sup> lucidity of diction they can muster. It is important that the cause of what we say being less readily or easily understood should not lie in our manner of speaking, but that it should be attributable either to the person who does not understand being very slow-witted, or to the things we are wishing to explain and point out being so difficult and subtle.

9, 23. For there are some things, in fact, which of their very nature are hard or impossible to understand, however much and in whatever way, as plainly as you like, they are gone over and analyzed by the speaker; and such things are only rarely, if there is some urgent need, or absolutely never to be presented in the hearing of the people. It is another matter though with books, which are so written that they hold the reader's attention when they are understood, and when they are not understood need not vex those who decline to read them. In conversations, too, with some people we should not shirk the duty of helping them to understand truths which we ourselves have already grasped, however hard they are to understand, and however laborious the effort of discussing them may be. That is, of course, if our listeners, or those we are having a conversation with, evince an eager desire to learn and do not lack the mental capacity in some way or other to grasp what is being suggested. In this case the teacher has to worry, not about how eloquently he is teaching, but how convincing his evidence is.

10, 24. A diligent quest for such evidence is sometimes neglectful of the more polished words, and is interested, not in those that sound well, but in those that indicate and suggest what the speaker wishes to prove. So a certain authority, when dealing with this kind of speech, says that there is to be found in it a certain "diligent negligence." <sup>[31]</sup> This, however, while cutting out embellishments, does not go so far as to cultivate the uncouth. Good teachers, though, will or should be so concerned with teaching, that if a word can only be correct Latin if it is obscure or ambiguous, while in common speech it has an incorrect form that avoids ambiguity or obscurity, they will speak it in the way the uneducated, not the way educated people are used to. For if our translators did not shrink from saying, *I will not assemble their conventicles from bloods* (Ps 16:4), since they felt it was pertinent to the context to put this noun in the

plural, though in the Latin language it is only used in the singular,<sup>[32]</sup> why should the dedicated teacher, speaking to the unlearned, shrink from saying *ossum* rather than *os*,<sup>[33]</sup> to avoid the single syllable being thought to belong to the plural *ora* rather than to the plural *ossa*, when African ears cannot distinguish between short and long vowels?

What is the point, after all, of correctness of speech which the hearers are unable to follow and understand, seeing that there is absolutely no point in speaking at all, if the people do not understand, whom we are speaking to precisely in order that they may understand? So the person who is teaching will avoid all words that do not in fact teach; and if instead of them he can correctly use others that are understood, he will prefer to choose them. But if he cannot, either because there are none such, or because they do not occur to him at that moment, he will also use words that are not so correct, provided the matter itself is being taught and learned correctly.

25. And it is not indeed only in conversation, whether with one or several persons, but also and above all in preaching to the people, that we should make every effort to be understood. In conversations, after all, everyone has the chance to ask questions. But where all are silent so that one may be heard, and all faces are turned expectantly toward him, neither custom nor good manners allow anyone to ask about what they have not understood; and for that reason the speaker should take every care to help the silent listener.

For the multitude greedy for knowledge usually indicates by its movements whether it has understood; and until it does so, the matter in hand should be gone over with every possible variety of approach and utterance. Now this is something that is simply not in the power of those who recite sermons they have prepared and learned by heart, word for word. As soon, though, as it is evident that the point has been understood, the preacher should either stop, or pass on to

another point. For just as a speaker who clears up things people want to know is welcome, so too one who drums in things they already know is burdensome—to those listeners, at least, whose whole expectation was hanging on the solution of the difficulties in the matters being set before them. Because if you also aim at giving the audience pleasure, you can also say things they already know very well; but here it is not what is said, but the way it is said that holds their attention.

But if the hearers are already familiar with this too, and enjoy it, then it makes almost no difference whether the speaker is reading it aloud, or saying it of his own. It is the common experience, after all, that things that are well written are not only read with enjoyment by those who come to them for the first time, but also do not fail to be enjoyed when read again by those who know them and whose memory of them has not faded away. Such writings, of course, are also listened to with pleasure by both kinds of person. But when people are reminded of what they have already forgotten, they are being taught.

However, I am not now discussing ways of pleasing an audience; I am talking about how those who wish to learn are to be taught. This is done in the best way when listeners both hear something true and understand what they hear. When this end is attained, the point should not be labored any further as though it had to go on and on being taught; perhaps, though, they need to be urged to take it to heart and remember it. If that seems to be the case, it must be done discreetly, to avoid irritating and boring them.

11, 26. Precisely this is eloquence, then, in the matter of teaching: to ensure, not that what was thought repellent should be found to be pleasing, or that something disliked should still be done, but that a point that was obscure or simply missed should be indicated and cleared up. If this is done, however, in a disagreeable way, only a few listeners

will get any profit from it, and those the most serious, who are eager to know what there is to be learned, however dismally and crudely it is expressed. When they have attained this object, they feed enjoyably on truth itself; it is indeed the characteristic trait of good minds and dispositions to love in words what is true, not the words themselves.

What, after all, is the use of a golden key if it cannot open what we want, or what is wrong with a wooden key if it can, since all we are looking for is that closed doors should be opened to us? But yes, there is a certain similarity between feeding and learning; so because so many people are fussy and fastidious, even those foodstuffs without which life cannot be supported need their pickles and spices.

*Three functions of eloquence: to teach, to delight, to sway*

12, 27. An eloquent man once said, you see, and what he said was true, that to be eloquent you should speak “so as to teach, to delight, to sway.” Then he added, “Teaching your audience is a matter of necessity, delighting them a matter of being agreeable, swaying them a matter of victory.” <sup>[34]</sup> Of these three, the one put first, that is the necessity of teaching, is to be found in the things we are saying, the remaining two in the way we say it. Therefore the person who is saying something with the intention of teaching should not consider he has yet said anything of what he wants to the person he wishes to teach, so long as he is not understood. Because even if he has said something he understands himself, he is not to be regarded as having said it to the person he is not understood by, while if he has been understood, he has said it, whatever his way of saying it may have been.

If on the other hand he also wishes to delight the person he is saying it to, or to sway him, he will not succeed in doing so whatever his way of saying it may have been; but in order to do so, it makes all the difference how he says it. Now just as the listener needs to be delighted if you are to



hold his attention and keep him listening, so he needs to be swayed, if you are to move him to act. And just as he is delighted if you speak agreeably, so in the same way he is swayed if he loves what you promise him, fears what you threaten him with, hates what you find fault with, embraces what you commend to him, deplures what you strongly insist is deplorable; if he rejoices over what you declare to be a matter for gladness, feels intense pity for those whom your words present to his very eyes as objects of pity, shuns those whom in terrifying tones you proclaim are to be avoided; and anything else that can be done by eloquence in the grand manner to move the spirits of the listeners, not to know what is to be done, but to do what they already know is to be done.

28. But if they still do not know, they must, of course, be taught before being moved. And perhaps when they are simply informed of the matters in hand, they will be moved in such a way that there is no need for them to be moved any more by greater eloquence of a more forceful kind. When there is a need of this, however, it must be done; and the need arises precisely then, when they know what should be done, and do not do it. And thus teaching is a matter of necessity. People, after all, are able both to act and not to act upon what they know; who though would ever say that they should act upon what they do not know? And that is why swaying an audience is not a matter of necessity, because it is not always needed, if the listener gives his full assent to the person who is teaching, or also delighting him. The reason, though, why it is a matter of victory is that an audience can be taught and delighted, and still not give their full assent to the speaker. And what use will those two be if this third thing is lacking?

But neither is delighting an audience a matter of necessity, seeing that when things that are true are being pointed out in a speech, which is what the function of teaching is about, it is not the concern of the speaker, nor is it

expected of him, that either his matter or his speech should give delight; but his matter by itself, being true, delights simply by being shown to be so. Which is why it frequently happens that even falsehoods give delight when they are convincingly laid bare and revealed to an audience. It is not because they are false, you see, that they delight, but because it is true that they are false, the speech by which this is shown to be true also gives delight.

13, 29. There are, however, fastidious people who do not take pleasure in the truth if it is presented in any old fashion, but only if it is presented in such a way that the speaker's style too is pleasing; and that is why no slight place in the art of eloquence is also allotted to the function of giving delight. Adding it, all the same, is not enough for the hardened cases who do not profit either from having understood or from having been delighted by the style of the person teaching them. What good, after all, do these two things do the man, who both admits that what has been said is true, and has high praise for the speech it has been said in, and still does not yield that full assent, which is the only thing the speaker is concentrating his attention on, when he is trying by what he says to persuade to a particular course of action?

For if the things that are being taught are of the kind which it is sufficient to believe or know, consenting to them simply means admitting that they are true. When, however, something is being taught that has to be done, and is precisely being taught so that it may be done, in vain does the way and style in which it is said give pleasure, if it is not put across in such a way that action follows. It is the duty, therefore, of the eloquent churchman, when he is trying to persuade the people about something that has to be done, not only to teach, in order to instruct them; not only to delight, in order to hold them; but also to sway, in order to conquer and win them. There still remains, in fact, that type to be swayed by eloquence in the grand manner to give his full assent, in

whom that result has not been produced by his admitting the truth of what has been demonstrated, even when this has been done in the most agreeable style.

14, 30. There are so many base and evil things that, so far from being practiced, should on the contrary be shunned and detested; and yet there are people who have spent so much effort upon this matter of an agreeable style that they have presented such things with the most persuasive eloquence to base and evil men, not for them to give them their consent, but simply and solely for the delectable pleasure of reading about them over and over again.<sup>[35]</sup> But may God spare his Church from experiencing what the prophet Jeremiah states about the synagogue of the Jews, when he says, *Amazement and horrid things have come upon the land; prophets were prophesying iniquity, and priests clapped their hands in applause, and my people loved it thus. And what will you do in the future?* (Jer 5:30–31). Oh what eloquence, all the more terrifying for being so simple, and all the more forcefully effective for being so down to earth! Oh indeed *an axe splitting the rocks* (Jer 23:29)! For that is what God himself, through this very prophet, said that his word is like, which he has pronounced through his holy prophets.

And so, far be it, far be it from us that priests should applaud those who utter iniquity, and that the people of God should love it thus. Far from us, I repeat, be such madness; for what shall we do in the future? And certainly, let the things that are said among us be less understood, less pleasing, less moving; but at least let things that are true and just be said, not iniquity be listened to gladly—which assuredly would not happen, if it were not put forward agreeably.

31. But a grave and serious-minded people, of whom it is said to the Lord, *In a grave people I will praise you* (Ps 35:18), will not even find delight in that kind of agreeable style, which is not indeed uttering iniquity, but is decking out

slight and fragile goods with a frothy crest of words, of a kind that not even great and enduring matters should be decently and seriously embellished with. There is something of this sort in a letter of the most blessed Cyprian; and the reason I think it occurred, or was deliberately produced, was so that posterity might know precisely what great tongue had been recalled from this superfluous excess by the soundness of Christian teaching, and confined to a graver and more moderate eloquence, such as can be safely admired in his later letters, and religiously emulated, though achieved only with the greatest difficulty. So he says in one passage:

Let us occupy this seat; the neighboring arbors provide us with privacy; here, while the wandering loops of tendrils wind their way in drooping twists and knots round the canes that carry them, the leafy roof has made a porch of the vine.<sup>[36]</sup>

This is all said, to be sure, with a marvelously copious and fertile fluency, but it offends against proper gravity with its over-lavish profusion. Those who like this sort of thing, though, will automatically assume that authors who do not say things in this way, but speak in a more restrained manner, are unable to speak in this way, not that they show good judgment by avoiding the style. That is why this holy man both showed that he could speak like this, because he did so on one occasion, and also that he did not choose to, because he never did so again on any other.

### *Pray before preaching*

15, 32. And so this eloquent speaker of ours is at pains, when he has just and good and holy things to say—he ought not, after all, to be saying anything else; so he is at pains to ensure as far as he can, when he says these things, that his listeners understand them, enjoy them, obey them. And he should not be in the slightest doubt that if he can ensure this, and to the extent that he can, it is more the piety of prayer

than the ready facility of orators that enables him to do so; by praying then both for himself and for those he is about to address, let him be a pray-er before being a speaker.<sup>[37]</sup> At the very moment he steps up to speak, before he even opens his mouth and says a word, let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, begging that it may belch forth what it has quaffed, or pour out what it he has filled it with.

About any of the matters, after all, that have to be dealt with in terms of faith and love, there are many things that can be said, and many ways they can be said in by those who are well versed in such work; but who knows what is the right thing for us to say, or for someone to hear from us, at precisely this time, but the one who can see into the hearts of us all? And who can ensure that we say what is needed and in the way it is needed, but the one *in whose hands are both we and our words* (Wis 7:16)? This being so, by all means let the man, who wishes both to know and to teach, learn all the things that are to be taught, and acquire proficiency in speaking, as befits a man of the Church. But at the actual moment he is due to speak, let him reflect that what really suits the good mind much better is what the Lord said: *Do not give thought to how or to what you are to speak; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to speak; for it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father who is speaking in you* (Mt 10:19–20). So if the Holy Spirit is speaking in those who are handed over to the persecutors on Christ's account, why not also in those who are handing Christ over to the learners?

16, 33. But anyone who says that people do not need to be given rules about what or how they should teach, if the Holy Spirit is making them teachers, can also say that we do not need to pray either, because the Lord said, *Your Father knows what you need before you ask it of him* (Mt 6:8); or that the apostle Paul should not have instructed Timothy and Titus on how they were to instruct others—three letters of

the apostle, by the way, which anyone charged with the role of teacher in the Church ought always to have before his eyes.

Do we not read in the First Letter to Timothy. *Proclaim these things and teach them* (1 Tm 4:11)? What they are, he had just said earlier on. Does this not occur there: *Do not rebuke an elder, but entreat him like a father* (1 Tm 5:1)? Is he not told in the second letter, *Hold on to the form of sound words which you have heard from me* (2 Tm 1:13)? Is he not also told there, *Keep busy, presenting yourself to God as a reliable worker, with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of truth straightforwardly* (2 Tm 2:15)? There too is this to be found: *Preach the word, keep at it, in season, out of season; reprove, exhort, rebuke, with all long-suffering and teaching* (2 Tm 4:2). And again, does he not say to Titus that a bishop ought to be *persevering in teaching the faithful word, so that he may be well able in sound teaching also to confute those who gainsay it* (Ti 1:9)? He also says there, *You, though, speak as befits sound doctrine; that the old men are to be sober*, and what follows (Ti 2:1–2). And again in that letter: *Speak out about these things, and exhort and rebuke with all command. Let no one ignore you. Admonish them to be subject to rulers and authorities*, etc. (Ti 2:15—3:1).

So what are we to think? Not, surely, that the apostle is taking up a position against himself, when after saying that teachers are made by the working of the Holy Spirit, he goes on himself to instruct them about what and how to teach? Or is it to be understood that even with the Holy Spirit giving bountifully to teachers in the things they have to teach, their functions as men are not canceled out; and yet all the same, *neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters, but the one who gives growth, which is God* (1 Cor 3:7)? So it is, too, that from the ministrations of holy men, or even of holy angels, nobody can correctly learn what is

involved in living with God, unless he has been made docile to God by God, who is asked in the psalm, *Teach me to do your will, since you are my God* (Ps 143:10). So it is, too, that the same apostle says to Timothy himself, teacher speaking of course to disciple, *You, though, persevere in the things which you have learned and which have been handed over to you, knowing from whom you learned them* (2 Tm 3:14). Medicines for the body, after all, which are provided for people by human beings, only do good to those whose health is restored by God; and he can cure without them, while they cannot do so without him, and yet they are still provided and applied—and if this is done out of kindness it is counted among the works of mercy, or as a good deed. So in the same way the assistance of sound doctrine provided by a human teacher is only then any good to the soul when God is at work to make it any good, seeing that he was able to give the gospel to man, even without its coming from men or through man.<sup>[38]</sup>

#### *More advice from Cicero*

17, 34. The man, therefore, who is striving by speaking to persuade people to do what is good, bearing in mind each of those three things, namely that he is meant to be teaching, delighting and swaying them, should pray, and take pains to ensure, as we said above,<sup>[39]</sup> that he is listened to with understanding, with enjoyment, and with obedience. When he does this in a fitting and suitable manner, he can be not undeservedly called eloquent, even if he does not win the assent of his audience. For to these three things, that is teaching, delighting and swaying, that other trio seems to have been attached, according to the mind of the great founder of Roman eloquence himself, when he said in similar vein, “That man therefore will be eloquent, who can talk about minor matters calmly, about middling ones moderately, about great matters grandly.”<sup>[40]</sup> It’s as if, were

he to add those other three as well, he could set it all out in one and the same judgment by saying, “That man therefore will be eloquent who, in order to teach, can talk about minor matters calmly; in order to delight, about middling matters moderately; in order to sway, about great matters grandly.”

18, 35. Now he could have illustrated these three modes, as stated by him, with instances taken from the law courts, but not from ecclesiastical occasions, which this man whom we wish to instruct will be concerned with in his public speaking. There, you see, those are minor matters in which a judgment is being sought in questions about money; great matters are those in which the welfare, even the life of persons is at stake, while occasions on which no such judgment has to be given, and nothing is done to get the listener to act or to make a decision, but only to delight him, they put in between the two, so to say, and thus called them middling.<sup>[41]</sup>

But in our sphere we have to refer everything we say, above all what we say from our higher position<sup>[42]</sup> to our congregations, to the welfare of persons, to their eternal, not merely temporal, welfare what’s more, which also means warning them to beware of eternal perdition. So here everything we say is a great matter, to the extent that not even what the ecclesiastical teacher has to say about money and acquiring or losing it should be regarded as a minor matter, whether it’s a minor or major sum of money involved. Justice, after all, is not a minor matter, and this of course we must maintain even where trifling sums are at stake, seeing that the Lord says, *Anyone who is faithful in a minimal amount is also faithful in a great amount* (Lk 16:10). So a minimal amount is certainly minimal, but being faithful in a minimal amount is a great thing. The essence of roundness, that is where the lines from the center to the edge are all equal, is the same in a large dish as in a tiny coin; in the same way, where minor matters are dealt with justly, this



does not diminish the greatness of justice.

36. In any case, when the apostle was talking about secular judgments and lawsuits (what kind, to be sure, if not ones to do with money?), he said, *Does any of you dare, when he has a case against another, to seek a judgment from the wicked, and not have recourse to the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is being judged by you, are you unfit to pass judgment on trifling matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels, let alone secular matters? If therefore you have secular lawsuits, set those who are contemptible in the Church, yes set them to judge them. I say it to your shame. So, is there really nobody among you wise enough to be able to judge between his brothers? But brother goes for judgment against brother, and this before unbelievers. It is already indeed a serious fault that you have lawsuits among yourselves at all. Why not rather put up with injustice? Why not rather let yourselves be cheated? You, though, act unjustly and cheat, and your own brothers at that. Or do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God?* (1 Cor 6:1–9).

Why is it that the apostle is waxing so indignant, so censorious, so vehemently reproachful, so threatening? Why is it that he shows the intensity of his feelings by such frequent and such harsh changes of tone? Why is it, finally, that he speaks so grandly about minimal matters? Did secular lawsuits merit such treatment from him? Surely not. But he is taking this line on account of justice, of charity, of mutual respect, which nobody of sound and sober mind will doubt are great things, however trifling and minimal the matters they are concerned with.

37. Certainly, if we were advising people how they should conduct their secular business, whether on their own account or that of their clients, before ecclesiastical judges, we would rightly advise them to present it calmly, as a minor

matter.<sup>[43]</sup> But when we are discussing the proper style of speaking for the man whom we wish to be a teacher of the truths by which we are delivered from eternal evils and conducted to eternal good things, wherever these are being presented, whether to the people, or privately to one person or several, whether to friends or enemies, whether in unbroken discourse or in conversation, whether in treatises or in books, whether in letters either lengthy or brief—they are great matters.

Unless, of course, because a cup of cold water is a trifling thing, and worth practically nothing, this means that the Lord was saying something trifling and and worthless, when he said that whoever gives one to a disciple of his *shall not lose his reward* (Mt 10:42); or that when this teacher gives a sermon on this point in church, he should reckon he is talking about a minor matter, and therefore should not speak either in the grand manner or even moderately, but only calmly. Is it not the case that when we have happened to speak to the people on this point, and God has helped us to say something suitable, it's as though a flame has leapt up out of that cold water, and fired even people with the coldest of hearts to perform works of mercy out of hope of a heavenly reward?

19, 38. And yet, while this teacher ought always to be setting forth great matters, he does not always have to say them in the grand manner. But he should do it calmly when he is teaching, moderately when he has something to blame or praise. But when it is something to be done, and we are addressing people who ought to do it, and yet are not willing to, that is when great matters are to be uttered in the grand manner, and in a way suited to swaying minds and hearts. And sometimes one and the same great matter is spoken of calmly if it is being taught, moderately if it is being proclaimed and preached,<sup>[44]</sup> and grandly if spirits that have turned away from it are being urged to turn back and be

converted.

What, after all, could be greater than God himself? Does that mean that we cannot learn about him? Or that someone who is teaching the unity of the Trinity ought to discuss the matter other than calmly, so that a subject involving such difficult distinctions may as far as God may grant be understood? Is it rhetorical flourishes that are required here, and not rather instructive models? Does the hearer have to be persuaded and swayed to do something, and not rather assisted to learn something? But when God is being praised, either in himself or in his works, what a vast prospect of beautiful and glowing language will occur to the speaker, in order to praise as best he can the one whom nobody can praise as befits him, nobody can fail to praise somehow or other! But if he is not being worshiped, or if idols or demons, or any creatures are being worshiped together with him or instead of him, then of course the grand manner is called for, to declare how wrong and wicked this is, and to turn people back from this wickedness.

#### *Further examples of different styles*

20, 39. There is an example of the calm manner in the apostle Paul, to illustrate the point more clearly, where he says: *Tell me, you that wish to be under the law, have you not heard the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a maidservant, one by a free woman; but the one by the maidservant was born according to the flesh, while the one by the free woman through a promise; which is all an allegory. For these are the two testaments, one indeed bringing forth from Mount Sinai into slavery, and that is Hagar. For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which is linked to this Jerusalem that now is, and is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother, etc.* (Gal 4:21–26).

And again, where he is presenting an argument and says,

*Brethren, I speak in merely human terms; still, nobody can invalidate or supersede a man's will and testament, once it has been probated. The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. It does not say "and seeds," as in the plural, but as in the singular, "and to your seed," which is Christ. But what I say is this: a law made four hundred and thirty years later cannot annul a testament probated by God, and make the promises void. For if the inheritance is by law, it is no longer by promise. But God granted it to Abraham by a promise (Gal 3:15–18). And because the thought could occur to someone hearing this, "So why was the law given, if the inheritance is not settled by it?" he put this objection to himself, and as if questioning himself said, Why then the law? Then he answered, It was laid down because of transgression, until the seed should come, arranged by angels in the hand of a mediator, to which the promise had been made. But a mediator is not of one, while God is one. And here the objection occurred to him, which he stated himself: Is the law therefore against the promises of God? And he answered, Surely not, and gave his reason, saying, For if a law had been given which could bring to life, then justice would certainly have come from the law. But scripture locked all things up under sin, so that the promise from faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe (Gal 3:19–22), and the rest, or if there is anything in the same vein.*

So it is part of the teacher's responsibility, not only to open closed doors and to unravel knotty problems, but also while this is being done to meet other problems that may perhaps arise, in case what we say should be called in question or refuted by them, provided, that is, that the solution of these problems occurs to us at the same time, or we may start something we cannot dispose of. It does happen, though, that when other problems intruding upon a problem, and then further problems intruding upon these

intrusive ones, are dealt with and solved, the argument stretches on and on to such lengths, that unless the disputant has an extremely good and disciplined memory, he is unable to get back to the original point he started from. It is, however, a very good thing if anything that can be gainsaid should be refuted as soon as it crops up, in case it should also crop up on an occasion when there is nobody who can answer it, or where such a person is indeed present but keeps quiet, and the person who raised it should go away, his mind not put at rest.

40. The apostle adopts a moderate style in these words: *Do not rebuke an older man, but entreat him as a father, younger men as brothers, old women as mothers, young women as sisters* (1 Tm 5:1-2). And again in these: *But I implore you, brothers, by the compassion of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrificial victim, holy, pleasing to God* (Rom 12:1). And almost the whole of that passage of exhortation displays a moderate kind of oratory—particularly fine, where things that are appropriately due in appropriate circumstances follow one another handsomely like debts being paid, in this way: *Having gifts that vary according to the grace that has been given to us, whether prophecy according to the rule of faith, or service in serving, or the one who teaches in teaching, or the one who encourages in encouragement, or the one who is bountiful in simplicity, or the one who is in charge in solicitude, or the one who takes pity in cheerfulness. Love without pretense, hating what is evil, cleaving to the good, loving one another with fraternal charity, vying with one another in mutual respect, not sluggish in zeal, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in trouble, punctilious in prayer, sharing with the saints in their needs, pursuing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. Rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep, sharing each other's thoughts* (Rom 12:6–15).

And how beautifully all this, after pouring out like that, is rounded off with a two-clause period: *Not thinking highly of yourselves, but going along with the lowly* (Rom 12:16). And a little later: *Persevering*, he says, *in this very thing, pay to all their due, taxes to whom taxes, tolls to whom tolls, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor*. This flow of clauses, one after the other, is also rounded off with a period, stitched together from two clauses: *Owe nobody anything, except to love one another* (Rom 13:6–8). And a little later on: *Night is far advanced*, he says, *while day has drawn near. And so let us cast aside the works of darkness, and clothe ourselves with the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day. not in revels and drunkenness, not in sleeping around and shamelessness, not in wrangling and jealousy; but clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make provision for the flesh in its lusts* (Rom 13:12–14). If someone were to phrase this “and for the flesh in its lusts make no provision,” he would undoubtedly be wooing the ears with a more rhythmical conclusion;<sup>[45]</sup> but the more sober translator preferred also to keep the order of words of the original. How it sounds in the Greek language which the apostle spoke, those who are more learned in that language even as regards these points of style can tell; still, it doesn't seem to me that what has been translated for us, keeping the same order of words, runs with a very smooth rhythm.

41. It must be admitted, certainly, that this embellishment of a speech, which consists of rhythmic concluding phrases, is wanting in our authors. Whether this is the fault of the translators, or whether (as I am inclined to think) the authors deliberately avoided these agreeable niceties, I dare not judge, since I confess I do not know. What I do know, for all that, is that if anybody skilled in this matter of rhythm were to rewrite the translators' concluding phrases according to the rules of such rhythms, which can be done very easily by substituting some words with the same meaning, or by

changing the order of the words found there; he will acknowledge that nothing he learned in the schools of grammar or rhetoric that is considered important was wanting in the writings of those God-sent men; and he will find many turns of phrase of real elegance, which are indeed elegant in our language, but above all in theirs, and none of which are to be found in the literature which these people are so proud of.

But one must beware of detracting from the weight of grave divine statements, while adding to their rhythm.<sup>[46]</sup> For the subject of music, in which this matter of number or rhythm is most fully studied, was to be found so prominently in our prophets that Jerome, the most learned of men, even recorded the meters of some of them, at least in the Hebrew language; but in order to keep the true meaning of the words, he did not transfer these meters into Latin.<sup>[47]</sup> For my part, though, to express my own sentiments, which are of course better known to me than to other people and than other people's sentiments, while I do not neglect these concluding rhythms in my own speaking, as far as I consider can decently be done, still what gives me more pleasure in our authors is that I find them there so very infrequently.

42. As for the grand manner of speaking, it is as far removed as can be from this moderate kind, being not so much a matter of elegantly stylish language as of the impetuous expression of very deep feelings. For it seizes on almost all those elegant embellishments, but if it doesn't have them to hand it doesn't look for them. It is in fact carried along by its own vehemence, and if it stumbles on some beauty of expression, it carries it along in virtue of its subject, rather than choosing it with a careful eye on appearances. It is sufficient, you see, for the subject which engages it that suitable words, rather than being picked by the deliberation of the tongue, should follow upon the ardor of the breast. After all, if a mighty man of valor should be

armed with steel that has been gilded and set with gems, intent upon the battle he does indeed do what he does with those arms, not because they are valuable, but because they are arms. He is still himself, and

supremely valiant, even when  
anger makes a weapon of whatever he breaks off.

(Vergil, *Aeneid* VII, 508)

The apostle is in full swing, concerned that for the sake of the ministry of the gospel the evils of this time should all be patiently borne, with the consolation of God's gifts. It is a great matter, and it is handled in the grand manner, while the embellishments of speech are not wanting either: *Behold*, he says, *now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Giving no offense in any matter, that the ministry may not be objected to, but commending ourselves in all things as ministers of God in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in tight straits, in blows, in prisons, in riots, in labors, in vigils, in fasting, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God, with the weapons of justice in the right hand and in the left, through glory and dishonor, through ill repute and good repute, as seducers and yet truthful, as ones unknown and we are known, as though dying and behold we are alive, as fenced in and not done to death, as sad but always rejoicing, as in want but enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things.* See him still on fire: *Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged* (2 Cor 6:2–11), and the rest, which it would take too long to continue with.

43. Here he is again in full swing to the Romans, concerned that the persecutions of this world should be overcome with charity, in the certain hope of God's help. He handles it, though, both in the grand and the decorative manner. *We know*, he says, *that for those who love God all*



*things work together for good, for those who have been called according to plan. For those whom he foreknew beforehand, he also predestined to be replicas of the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What therefore shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? The one who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how has he not also with him granted us all things? Who will bring charges against the chosen ones of God? God who justifies them? Who is it that may condemn them? Christ Jesus who died, or rather who rose again, who is at the right hand of God, who is also interceding for us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being done to death all day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." But in all these things we do more than conquer through him who loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angel nor principality, neither things present nor things to come, neither might nor height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:28–39).*

44. As for the Letter to the Galatians, although the whole of it is written in the calm style of speaking, except for its first and last parts,<sup>[48]</sup> where you have the moderate style, still he does insert one place of such heartfelt emotion, that without any embellishments indeed of the sort to be found in the passages we have quoted just now, it could still only be spoken in the grand manner. *You observe days, he says, and months and years and seasons. I am afraid about you, lest perchance I have labored over you for nothing. Be as I am, since I too am as you are, brothers, I beg you. You have done*

*me no harm. You know that it was through a weakness of the flesh that some time ago I preached the gospel to you, and you did not spurn the trial you underwent in my flesh, nor reject me, but you took me to your heart like an angel of God, like Christ Jesus. So what was your blessedness? I bear you witness that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So have I become an enemy to you by preaching the truth? They are zealous for you in a way that is not good, but they wish to exclude you, so that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in the good at all times, and not only when I am present among you, my little children, with whom I am again in labor, until Christ takes shape in you. But I wish I were now present among you and could change my tone, because I do not know what to make of you (Gal 4:10–20).*

Do we have here any words balanced against each other in contrast, or linked to each other in any kind of progression, or has there been any music of phrases and clauses and periods? And yet that did not result in any tepidity in the grandeur of the emotion, with which we sense the whole passage to be so highly charged.

*Examples from ecclesiastical writers: Cyprian and Ambrose*

21, 45. But these passages from the apostle are clear in such a way that they are also profound, and so written and committed to memory that they call not only for a reader or a hearer, but also for an expositor, for anyone who is not content with their surface meaning, but wishes to plumb their depths. For that reason, let us take a look at these different kinds of speaking in those authors who by reading these have made advances in the knowledge of matters pertaining to divinity and salvation, and have ministered that knowledge to the Church.

The blessed Cyprian employs the plain, calm manner of

speaking in the book where he discusses the sacrament of the cup.<sup>[49]</sup> In it, that is to say, the question has been raised and is settled whether the Lord's cup should have only water in it, or water mixed with wine. But we must give an extract from it by way of example. So after the letter's opening salutation he is now getting down to settling the question that has been raised:

But you must know, he says, that we have been admonished, in offering the cup, to keep to what has been handed down to us from the Lord, and that nothing different should be done by us from what the Lord did for us first; so that the cup which is offered in commemoration of him should be offered with wine mixed in it. For since Christ says, *I am the true vine* (Jn 15:8), the blood of Christ is assuredly not water, but wine; nor can his blood, by which we have been redeemed and given life, be seen to be in the cup when wine is lacking in the cup. For it is by wine that Christ's blood is shown forth, and by which it is proclaimed by the sacramental symbolism and testimony of all the scriptures.

For we find in Genesis, as regards the sacramental symbolism, that Noah was a forerunner in this very case, and presented a representation of the Lord's passion there, in that he drank wine, got drunk, stripped himself naked in his own home, and was lying on his back with his thighs naked and spread out; in that his nakedness was pointed out by his middle son, but covered by the eldest and youngest;<sup>[50]</sup> and the rest which there is no need to run through, as this is enough on its own to show Noah as a type of the true reality to come, since he drank wine, not water, and thus presented an image of the Lord's passion.

Again, we can see in the priest Melchizedek a sacramental prefiguration of the Lord's sacrifice, according to the testimony of the divine scripture, where it says, *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Now he was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abraham* (Gn 14:18–19). Now that Melchizedek represented Christ is declared by the Holy Spirit in the psalms, saying to the Son in the person of the Father, *Before the daystar I begot you; you are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek* (Ps 110:4).

This, and the rest of the letter that follows, keeps to the

style of calm diction, which readers can easily discover for themselves.

46. Saint Ambrose too, when dealing with the great matter of the Holy Spirit, to demonstrate his equality with the Father and the Son, employs a plain, calm style of speaking, since the subject he has undertaken does not call for flowery language, or for emotional fireworks to sway people's spirits, but requires instructive examples and illustrations of the matters proposed. So among other things, he says at the beginning of this work:<sup>[51]</sup>

Gideon was moved by this oracle, and on hearing that the Lord would deliver his people from their enemies through one man, even in the absence of thousands of the people, he offered a kid of the goats, and following the angel's instructions placed its flesh and unleavened bread on the rock, and poured the broth over it all. The moment the angel of God touched it all with the tip of the rod he carried, fire burst out of the rock, and thus the sacrifice which was offered was consumed.<sup>[52]</sup> This seems to be a clear indication that that rock was a type of the body of Christ, because it is written, *They drank from the rock following them, and the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4). This certainly did not refer to his divinity, but to his flesh, which has flooded the hearts of thirsty people with the perennial river of his blood. So it was then already declared in a mystery that the Lord Jesus would abolish in his flesh, by being crucified, the sins of the whole world, and not only actual misdeeds, but also the greedy lusts entertained in thought. For the flesh of the kid relates to faults of actual commission, the broth to the enticements of greed, as it is written, *The people lusted with a very bad desire, and they said, who will feed us with flesh?* (Num 11:4). That the angel, therefore, stretched out his rod and touched the rock, from which fire came out, showed that the flesh of the Lord, filled with the divine Spirit, would burn up all the sins of the human condition. Which is why the Lord too said, *I have come to cast fire upon the earth* (Lk 12:49);

and so on in the rest of the work, in which he is at pains to teach and prove the point.

47. In the moderate style there is that praise of virginity

in Cyprian:<sup>[53]</sup>

Now our words are addressed to virgins, whose solicitude must be all the greater, the more sublime their honor. Here is the blossom on the Church's boughs, the splendid ornament of spiritual grace, the joyful genius of praise and honor, a work unimpaired and unspoiled, the image of God responding to the utter holiness of the Lord, the more illustrious portion of Christ's flock. The glorious fruitfulness of mother Church rejoices through them, and flourishes in them abundantly; and the more that glorious virginity adds to its numbers, the greater grows the mother's joy.

And in another place at the end of the letter:

*Just as we have borne, he says, the image of the one from the mire, so let us also bear the image of the one from heaven* (1 Cor 15:49). Virginity bears this image, unimpaired wholeness bears it, holiness and truth bear it, those who are mindful of God's discipline bear it, those who combine justice with religion, who are steady in faith, humble in fear, strong to endure everything, meek in bearing with insults, prompt in showing kindness, of one mind and heart in fraternal peace. Each and everyone of these things you, O good virgins, ought to observe, to love, to fulfill, you that give all your time to God and Christ, and so go ahead of the rest of us to the Lord, having chosen the greater and the better part.<sup>[54]</sup> Those of you advanced in years, act as tutors to the younger ones; those who are younger, give a lead to your peers, stir each other up with mutual encouragement, urge one another on to glory with enviable examples of virtue. Persevere bravely, proceed spiritually along the way, arrive happily at journey's end; only please remember us then, when your virginity finally receives the honor that is its due.<sup>[55]</sup>

48. Ambrose also uses the moderate and flowery style of speaking, when he is proposing to professed virgins a kind of model for them to imitate in their way of life; and he says:<sup>[56]</sup>

She was a virgin not only in body but also in mind, so that she did not adulterate the sincerity of her affections with any time-serving deceit; she was humble of heart, serious in her words, of a prudent spirit, sparing of speech, always readier to read; not placing her hope *in the uncertainty of riches* (1 Tm 6:17) but in the prayers of the poor; intent upon her work, bashful in her

words; looking to God, not any man, as the arbiter of her mind; insulting nobody to the face, wishing all people well, standing up in the presence of her elders, never jealous of her peers; shunning boastfulness, following reason, loving virtue. When did she ever hurt her parents even by so much as her expression? When did she ever wrangle with her companions, ever turn up her nose at the lowly, ever laugh at a cripple, ever turn her back on the needy? Punctiliously attending only those gatherings of men which mercy would not blush at nor modesty pass by. Nothing wild in her eyes, nothing pert in her talk, nothing shameless in her demeanor; not too feeble in her gestures, too loose in her gait, too petulant in her tone of voice, so that the very aspect of her body was an image of her mind, and a picture of her probity. It ought, of course, to be possible to tell a good house by its forecourt, so that it assures you on your first step inside that there is no darkness lurking within, as by the light of a lamp placed inside and shining outside.

Why should I run through the meanness of her diet, the generous abundance of her duties, the one going far beyond what nature requires, the other falling considerably short of what nature needs? In the one case no time was left idle, in the other days were joined together in fasting—and if ever the will to take some refreshment seemed to triumph, food was forthcoming simply to stave off death, not to provide any pleasure, and so on.

The reason I have quoted this as an example of the moderate style is that he is not here urging his readers to take a vow of virginity, which they have not yet taken, but telling those who have already taken their vow what kind of lives they should live. For the human spirit, after all, to undertake such a great and daunting purpose, it needs to be roused and fired by the grand mode of speaking. But the martyr Cyprian wrote about the dress of virgins, not about undertaking a life of virginity. This bishop, on the other hand, also fired them to this with great eloquence.<sup>[57]</sup>

49. But I will quote examples of the grand style of speaking from the works of both of them. Both, that is to say, inveighed against women who color their faces with paints, or rather discolor them. The first of the two, when dealing

with this subject, said among other things:<sup>[58]</sup>

If any professional painter had taken the features of a subject and her beauty and the quality of her body, carefully emulating their natural coloring, and putting his signature to the work; and then someone else had laid hands on the signed and finished portrait, and presumed as if he were a better artist to redesign what had already been designed and painted, it would look like a serious insult to the first painter, and just grounds for indignation. And now you reckon, do you, that in your outrageously bold temerity you can insult God's skill as a craftsman with impunity? For while you may not be a shameless and unchaste woman in human eyes, with your rouge and your make-up, by corrupting and violating what is God's work, you convict yourself of being worse than an adulteress. What you suppose is just adorning yourself, what you suppose is just doing your hair, is really an attack on a divine work, a distortion of the truth. There is the voice of the apostle warning us: *Purge out the old leaven, so that you may be fresh dough, as you are unleavened. For Christ has been sacrificed as our passover. And so let us celebrate the feast, not in the old leaven, nor in the leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of genuineness and truth* (1 Cor 5:7–8). Can genuineness and truth remain, when what is genuine has been polluted, and what is true has been changed into a lie, adulterated with strange colors and treated with rouge? Your Lord says, *You cannot make one hair white or black* (Mt 5:36), and you, to drown your Lord's voice, wish to prove more powerful. You have the nerve, the hardihood, and the sacrilegious contempt to dye your hair; what an ill omen for the future that you should already be arranging for yourself a flame-colored coiffure!

It would take too long to include everything that follows.

50. The later writer had this to say against such persons:

<sup>[59]</sup>

Hence arise those incentives to vice, that they paint their faces with exquisite colors, while they dread displeasing their husbands, and from adulterating their features they go on to dream about adulterating their chastity. What mindless folly is this, to change the artistry of nature, to resort to painting it, and while they fear the judgment of their husbands, to lose their own! For the woman who desires to change what she was born with is the first to pronounce judgment on herself; thus while she

is taking pains to please another, she is first of all displeased with herself. What truer judge, woman, can we seek of your ugliness than yourself, afraid as you are of being seen as you are? If you are beautiful, why conceal yourself? If ugly, why falsely present yourself as beautiful, since you will gain the favor neither of your own awareness of yourself nor of another's mistaken awareness of you? For he loves another woman, and you wish to please another man, and you get angry if he loves another, though he is being taught all about adultery by you. You are miserably the very teacher of the wrong done to you. Herself the victim of a pimp, she turns to pimping, and although she is a worthless woman, she is still not sinning against anyone else, but against herself. Crimes committed in adultery are almost more tolerable; for in that case it is modesty, in this nature that is adulterated.

It is clear enough, I think, that by this rhetoric women are being forcefully urged not to adulterate their appearance with cosmetics, and to cultivate modesty and bashfulness. Accordingly we acknowledge here neither the plain and calm, nor the moderately ornate style, but quite simply the grand manner of oratory. And in these two writers whom I have chosen to quote, and in other churchmen who speak both worthily and well, that is, as the matter requires, plainly and clearly, or in rather more ornate and flowery language, or with fiery vigor, these three styles can be found throughout their many writings or speeches; and students by assiduous reading or listening can, with practice, acquire the knack and the habit of using them.

*More general remarks on the three styles: an experience of his own*

22, 51. Nor should anybody suppose that it is against the rules to mix these three styles; on the contrary, to the extent that it can reasonably be done, a speech should be given variety by the use of all of them, because when it continues too long in one vein, it ceases to hold the listener's attention. But when a transition is made from one to another, a



discourse proceeds more acceptably, even if it goes on rather too long, although each style has its own variations in the mouths of eloquent speakers, which prevent it from growing cold or stale in the ears of those who are listening. Nonetheless, it is easier to endure the plain style alone for any length of time than the grand manner alone. The fact is that the more profoundly the listeners' emotions need to be stirred if we are to win their assent, the shorter the time they can be held at that pitch, once they have been sufficiently aroused. And that is why we must beware lest, while we are wishing to stir to a still higher pitch feelings that are already running high, they should in fact fall away from the level to which our rousing oratory has brought them. But after introducing some things that can be said more calmly and plainly, you can then profitably return to what has to be said in the grand manner, thus letting the force of your speech alternate like the waves of the sea. From all this it follows that the grand manner of speaking, if you have to speak for any length of time, should not be offered neat, but should be varied by the inclusion of other styles; but the whole speech, all the same, is to be attributed to that style which predominates.

23, 52. For it makes a difference what style is introduced into which in particular and necessary places. Thus it is correct always, or nearly always, to begin a speech that is to be in the grand manner with a moderate opening. And an eloquent speaker is quite capable of saying some things calmly and plainly which could be delivered in the grand manner, so that what he does actually say in the grand manner is rendered grander still in comparison, its brilliance highlighted by what you could call the shadows of the other passages. But if in a speech where any style predominates there are knotty problems to be solved, what is called for is acumen, and this claims the calm, plain style as its own. And thus this style is to be employed even in the other two kinds,

when such points occur.

In the same way, when something is to be praised or faulted, but where neither a person's life nor liberty is at stake, and no kind of assent to some action is being sought, the moderate style should be applied and introduced, in whatever other kind of speech the point arises. Thus in a speech in the grand manner the other two styles can also find a place, and the same is true for a discourse in the calm, plain style. The moderate kind of speech, however, sometimes though not always requires the plain style if, as I said, a knotty problem crops up that needs to be solved, or when some matters that could be are deliberately not embellished, but are expressed in plain, unadorned words, in order to throw into relief some more decorative and nicely turned embellishments. But a speech in the moderate style never calls for the grand manner, since it is delivered in order to delight the spirits of the audience, not to stir them to action.

24, 53. Certainly it is not to be assumed that if a speaker is applauded rather frequently and warmly he must therefore be speaking in the grand manner; shrewd arguments in the plain style and embellishments in the moderate can elicit the same response, after all. The grand manner, however, by its very weight frequently makes the voices hush,<sup>[60]</sup> makes the tears gush. Well anyway, I was once in Caesarea of Mauritania,<sup>[61]</sup> trying to dissuade the people from their local civil war, or rather something more than civil, which they called "the mob"<sup>[62]</sup>—for it is not only citizens but also neighbors, brothers, indeed parents and sons, divided into two parties, ritually fighting each other with stones at a certain time of the year, and each of them killing anyone he could; and I did indeed speak and act in the grand manner, to the best of my ability, in order to root out such a cruel and inveterate evil from their hearts and habits and rid them of it by my speaking. But still I did not consider I had achieved anything when I heard them applauding me, but only when I

saw them weeping. Their applause only showed they were being instructed and delighted, while their tears indicated that they were being swayed. When I observed these, I was confident, even before the outcome confirmed it, that I had beaten that monstrous custom, handed down from their fathers and grandfathers and their remote ancestors, which was laying hostile siege to their breasts, or rather was in full possession of them. I soon finished the sermon, and turned their hearts and tongues to giving thanks to God. And here we are, something like eight years or more later, and by the good favor of Christ nothing of the sort has since been attempted. There are many other experiences which have taught me that people have shown by their groans rather than their shouts, sometimes also by their tears, and finally by the change in their lives, what the grandeur of a wise man's speech has achieved in them.

54. People have also frequently been changed by the calm and plain kind of speaking—but so as to know what they were ignorant of, or to believe what used to strike them as incredible; not, however, to do what they already knew should be done and were reluctant to do. For swaying that kind of stubbornness, after all, hard-hitting talk in the grand manner is needed. Again, when praise and blame are being eloquently distributed, while this belongs to the moderate style, some people are so affected that not only are they delighted by the eloquence displayed in praising and blaming, but they themselves also start trying to live in a praiseworthy way and to give up a blameworthy kind of life. But do all who are delighted by this style also imitate the examples given, as all who are swayed by the grand manner proceed to act? And do all who are being taught in the plain style *ipso facto* know or believe to be true what they were ignorant of?

25, 55. From all this one concludes that those two kinds of speaking which are intended to achieve something are

supremely necessary for the person who wishes to speak both wisely and eloquently. But the one which engages in the moderate style, that is in order to delight the hearer by its very eloquence, is not to be made use of for its own sake, but in order that matters which are being usefully and properly talked about, even though they do not call for a style that either instructs or moves, because an audience is being addressed which is both knowledgeable and favorable, might the more readily win that audience's assent and stick in its memory.

After all, the universal task of eloquence, in whichever of these three styles, is to speak in a way that is geared to persuasion. The aim, what you intend, is to persuade by speaking. In any of these three styles, indeed, the eloquent man speaks in a way that is geared to persuasion, but if he doesn't actually persuade, he doesn't achieve the aim of eloquence. Now in the calm, plain style he persuades his hearers that what he is saying is true; in the grand manner he persuades them to do the things they know should be done and are not being done; in the moderate manner he persuades them that he is speaking beautifully and with many a flourish—and what need do we have of an aim like that? Let those people aim at it who glory in their tongues, and who pride themselves on panegyrics and suchlike speeches, where the audience does not have to be taught anything or moved to action, but solely and simply to be delighted.

We, however,<sup>[63]</sup> should refer this aim to another one; that is, we should wish to achieve by this style what we wish to achieve when we speak in the grand manner, which is that good morals should be loved and bad morals shunned. This is appropriate when people are not so alienated from such a course that they apparently have to be driven to it by the grand manner of speaking—when, for example, they are already set on it, but need to be prodded into going about it more zealously, or reminded to persevere in it firmly. So it is

that we may make use of the embellishments of the moderate style, not just to show off, but sensibly, not content with the aim simply of delighting our hearers, but doing this rather, so that in this way too they may be helped toward the good object about which we wish to persuade them.

26, 56. We have stated above that if the person who is speaking wisely also wishes to speak eloquently, he should so<sup>[64]</sup> manage those three styles that he is heard with understanding, with pleasure, and with compliance. But this is not to be taken in the sense that each of these three is to be attributed to one each of those, so that it pertains to the calm, plain mode to be heard with understanding, to the moderate mode to be heard with pleasure, and to the grand mode to be heard with obedient compliance, but rather that the speaker should always have these three intentions, and as far as possible act to realize them, even when he is concentrating on just one of those styles. After all, we do not want even what we say calmly and plainly to bore people; and thus we want it to be heard not only intelligently, with understanding, but also gladly, with pleasure.

What in fact are we aiming at, when we support with divine testimonies what we say in our teaching, but that we should be heard with obedient compliance, that is that these testimonies should be believed, with the assistance of him to whom it was said, *Your testimonies have come to be exceedingly believed* (Ps 93:5)? Again, what is the person looking for, who is narrating facts to learners, but to be believed, even though he is talking in the plain, unadorned manner? And who would be willing to listen to him, unless he also held the hearer's attention with some pleasantness of style? Because, of course, if he is not understood, it's obvious to all of us that he cannot be heard either with pleasure or with compliance.

It frequently happens, though, that when the most difficult problems are being solved in the calm, plain mode,

and something is demonstrated with unexpected clarity, when from heaven knows what kind of ship's holds, from where they were quite unhopèd for, the speaker hauls up and displays the shrewdest judgments, convicting his opponent of error, and proving that what he seemed to be saying so irrefutably is false; especially when his words have a certain grace that is not contrived but somehow or other quite natural, and a number of rhythmic periods that are not just thrown in to show off, but are almost necessary, and distilled, so to say, from the very matter itself; it frequently happens that such spontaneous applause breaks out on an occasion of this kind that you would scarcely suppose the calm, plain mode was being employed. Just because this style, after all, does not enter the arena either dressed up or armed, but engages the opponent as it were naked, it doesn't follow that it fails to grapple him with its sinewy arms, and to overthrow the falsehood resisting it, and to reduce it to nothing by its sheer strength of muscle. How is it, though, that people speaking in this way are repeatedly and loudly applauded, if not because it is such a pleasure to see truth thus demonstrated, thus defended, thus unbeaten? That is why in this calm, plain mode of speaking too, this teacher and speaker of ours ought so to conduct himself that he is heard with pleasure and with compliance, as well as with understanding.

57. Coming now to eloquence in the moderate mode, the eloquent churchman neither leaves it entirely unadorned, nor adorns it inappropriately, nor seeks simply and solely to delight his audience, which is the one and only thing other orators intend with it. Rather, even in his praising of some things or finding fault with others, he wishes his hearers, surely, to comply with what they hear from him by aiming at the former or holding on to them more firmly, while shunning or ridding themselves of the latter. But if what he says is not understood, it cannot also be heard with any

pleasure. Accordingly those three objects, that listeners should understand what they hear, should enjoy hearing it, and should comply with it, are also to be aimed at in this mode of speaking, in which giving pleasure has pride of place.

58. Finally, where the need is to move and sway the audience with the grand manner (which is necessary when they admit that what is being said is true and that it is being said very pleasantly, and still do not wish to do what they are being told), the speaker must undoubtedly employ the grand manner. But who will be moved if they do not know what is being said? And who will be constrained to listen if they are not also being entertained? So it is that in this mode also, where stubborn hearts need to be swayed to obedience by the very grandeur of the style, unless the speaker is listened to with understanding and with pleasure, he cannot be listened to with compliance.

*The preacher's lifestyle carries more weight than his style of oratory*

27, 59. But for us to be listened to with obedient compliance, whatever the grandeur of the speaker's utterances, his manner of life carries more weight. For the man who speaks wisely and eloquently, while living a worthless kind of life, does indeed instruct many who are eager to learn, although, as it is written, *he is unprofitable to his own soul* (Sir 37:19), which is why the apostle says, *Whether from ulterior motives or for the sake of the truth, let Christ be proclaimed* (Phil 1:18). Now Christ is the truth,<sup>[65]</sup> and yet the truth can be proclaimed even by the not truth, that is, so that things that are right and true may be preached by a twisted and deceitful heart. This of course is how Jesus Christ is proclaimed by those *who seek what is their own, and not what is of Jesus Christ* (Phil 2:21).

But since good people who are believers listen

obediently, not to any mere human being, but to the Lord himself as he says, *Do what they say; what they do, however, do not do, for they say and do not do* (Mt 23:3), that is why even those who do not act in a profitable way can be listened to with profit. For they are indeed bent on seeking what is their own, but they dare not teach what is their own, from the higher place, that is to say, of the chair of ecclesiastical authority, which has been established by sound doctrine. That is why the Lord himself, before speaking about such people as I have mentioned, first said, *They sit on the chair of Moses* (Mt 23:2). So it was that chair, not their own but the one of Moses, that was constraining them to say good things, even while not doing good things. So they were doing their own thing in their lives, but were not permitted to teach their own thing by the chair that belonged to someone else.

60. And so they benefit many people by saying what they do not do, but they would benefit far, far more by doing what they say. There are plenty of people, after all, who seek an excuse for their bad lives in those of their very own leaders and teachers, replying in their hearts, or even bursting out with it and saying to their faces, “Why don’t you yourself do what you are telling me to do?” Thus it happens that they do not listen obediently to someone who doesn’t listen to himself, and that they despise the word of God being preached to them along with the preacher. Finally, we have the apostle writing to Timothy, and after saying, *Let nobody despise your youth*, adding a reason why it should not be despised, and saying, *but be a model for the faithful in word, in behavior, in love, in faith, in chastity* (1 Tm 4:12).

28, 61. That such a teacher should be heard with compliant obedience, he may also unashamedly speak in the grand manner, as well as in the plain and the moderate style, because he does not live in a despicable manner. For he chooses to live a good life in such a way that he does not neglect his good reputation either, but takes care, as far as he



can, *to act well in the sight of God and of men* (2 Cor 8:21), fearing him and being concerned for them.

In his sermons too he should prefer to please with the substance of what he says more than with the words he says it in; nor should he imagine that a thing is said better unless it is said more truly; and as a teacher his words should be serving him, not he his words. This, after all, is what the apostle says: *Not in the wisdom of the word, lest the cross of Christ should be canceled out* (1 Cor 1:17). The same point is also made by what he says to Timothy: *Do not argue about words; for it is of no use for anything but for the subversion of the hearers* (2 Tm 2:14). Nor was the reason for saying this that we on our part should not speak up for the truth against opponents attacking the truth; in that case where would what he said fit in, where he was showing what sort of man a bishop should be: *That he should be strong on sound doctrine, and capable of refuting those who contradict it* (Ti 1:9)? For arguing about words does not mean caring how error may be overcome by truth, but how your way of saying things may be preferred to someone else's.

Accordingly, the one who does not argue about words, whether he is speaking calmly and plainly, or in the moderate style or the grand manner, is intending that by his words the truth should become clear to his hearers, that the truth should please them, that the truth should move them, seeing that not even charity, which is the end of the commandment and the fulfilling of the law,<sup>[66]</sup> can in any way be rightly directed, if the things that are loved by it are not true, but false. Indeed, though, just as someone who has a beautiful body and a misshapen mind is more to be grieved over than if he also had a misshapen body, so too those who eloquently utter things that are false are more to be pitied than if they said such things in a shapeless style. What therefore does it mean to speak not only eloquently but also wisely, if not to provide words that are sufficient in the plain

style, brilliant in the moderate, vehement and forceful in the grand manner, but still for saying true things that really need to be heard? But if anyone is unable to do both, let him say wisely what he does not say eloquently, rather than say eloquently what he says unwisely. 29, If however he cannot even do this, let him so conduct himself that he not only earns a reward for himself, but also gives an example to others, and so his manner of life can itself be a kind of eloquent sermon.

*Conclusion: Those who cannot compose their own sermons should learn by heart and preach those of acknowledged masters*

62. There are, of course, some people who can declaim and enunciate well, but cannot think up and compose anything to say and declaim. But if they take things that have been written eloquently and wisely by others, and proffer them to the people, provided they have that role to play,<sup>[67]</sup> they are not acting improperly. For in this way too we get the useful result of there being many preachers of the truth without there being many masters, if all say the same thing, taught by the one true master, and there are no schisms among them.<sup>[68]</sup> Nor should such men be deterred by the words of the prophet Jeremiah, through whom God reproves those *who steal his words, each one from his neighbor* (Jer 23:30). Those who steal, after all, are purloining what does not belong to them; but God's word does belong to those who do what he tells them. In fact, it's the man who speaks well and lives badly that really speaks words that do not belong to him. For any good things that he says seem to be the product of his own wits, but do not go along at all with his morals. And so the ones who God said are stealing his words are those who want to give the appearance of being good by speaking what belongs to God, when in fact they are bad by doing what belongs to themselves.

Nor, in fact, is it they who are saying the good things they do say, if you pay careful attention. How, after all, can they be saying in words what they are contradicting in deeds? It was not for nothing, you see, that the apostle said about such people: *They claim that they know God, but contradict it with their deeds* (Ti 1:16). So in one way it is they who are saying it, and again in another way it is not they who are saying it, since each thing is true that Truth has said. Speaking of such people, *What they say, he said, do, but what they do, do not do*, that is, do what you hear from their mouths; do not do what you see in their works; *for they say*, he went on, *and do not do* (Mt 23:3). Therefore, although they do not do, they still say. But in another place where he is chiding such people, *Hypocrites*, he says, *how can you say good things, since you are bad?* (Mt 12:34). And consequently it is not they who say even the things they do say, when they say good things, inasmuch as by will and work they contradict what they say.

Thus it can come about that a learned but bad man may compose a sermon in which the truth is proclaimed, to be spoken by another man who is not learned, but is good; when this happens, he is himself handing over from himself what does not belong to him, while the other man is receiving what is in fact his own from someone it does not belong to. But when good men who are believers do this service for good men who are believers, both parties are saying what is their own, because God too is theirs and the things they are saying are his. And those who are unable to compose these good sermons make them their own, when they compose themselves to live according to what they contain.

30, 63. But whether you are at this very moment about to preach to a congregation, or give a talk to any kind of group, or whether you are on the point of dictating something that is to be preached to a congregation, or to be read by anyone who wishes and is able to, you should pray that God may put

good words into your mouth. After all, if Queen Esther prayed, when she was going to speak in the king's presence for the temporal salvation of her people, that God might put suitable words into her mouth, how much more should you pray to receive such a favor, when you are toiling in word and teaching for the people's eternal salvation?

Those, however, who are going to say something that they have received from others, should pray for those they receive it from even before they do so,<sup>[69]</sup> that they may be given what they hope to receive from them; and when they have received it, they should pray both that they themselves may give it out well, and that those they give it out to may take it well; and on the successful conclusion of the talk they must give thanks to the same God from whom they cannot doubt that they have received it, so that he that boasts may boast in the one<sup>[70]</sup> *in whose hand are both we and our words* (Wis 7:16).

31, 64. This book has turned out longer than I wished, and than I expected. But for the reader or listener to whom it is acceptable it will not be too long, while anyone who does find it too long, and who wants to know what it contains, should read it piecemeal. As for those who are not interested in knowing what is in it, they should not complain about its length. I, for my part, give thanks to our God that in these four books I have set out to the best of my poor ability, not what sort of pastor I am myself, lacking many of the necessary qualities as I do, but what sort the pastor should be who is eager to toil away, not only for his own sake but for others, in the teaching of sound, that is of Christian, doctrine.

## Notes

- [1]. A rather free paraphrase, I have to admit. He is stating what any public speaker must set out to do from the moment he first opens his mouth; he must render his audience, literally, "benevolent, attentive, and docile."

- [2]. A play on words in the Latin: *Quis ita desipiat, ut hoc sapiat?*
- [3]. This passage bears out my contention in the Translator's Note that the whole work had been undertaken as a kind of manual to help the clergy with their preaching. Augustine does not propose to send the priests and deacons, grown men, back to the schools of rhetoric—though he hopes they may be able to study the subject in their spare time. No, it is the *adolescentes* among the clergy, that is to say the lectors or readers, who were frequently boys in their teens, that could advantageously be sent along to the schools of rhetoric. We must remember that there were no seminaries in those days, and these young lectors would be receiving their “ecclesiastical” education, at least in a Church organized like Augustine's at Hippo Regius, and possibly Aurelius' at Carthage, in a house of clergy from senior priests. And some of them, the older ones, would already be involved in pastoral duties, from which they should not be taken in order to go and study rhetoric.
- [4]. Here he may well have had debates with the Donatists in mind, or talks to Catholics about Donatism; the true story of the original schism had to be told again and again, and appeal to be made to the documents of the case, whether to the court records of the time of Constantine, or also, as the dispute widened to include theological disagreements, to the works of Cyprian.
- [5]. In the Latin text this section begins with the previous sentence; but the older editors before the Maurists put their chapter division here—I think with better judgment.
- [6]. That is, in a word, preaching. He is writing for the African clergy, in particular, perhaps, for their bishops.
- [7]. Cicero, *On Rhetoric (De Inventione Rhetorica)* 1, 1.
- [8]. Not entirely consistent with what he has just said in the previous paragraph—he uses the same expression in both places, *verba tenere*. But here he is urging clergymen of the second category of that paragraph, those who see into the heart of the scriptures, to rise to the category of those who can also quote them at will—particularly if they lack the skill of eloquence.
- [9]. *Qui propriis verbis minor erat*, in the text—while he was less in his own words, he can also grow. I emend to *quod propriis verbis minus erat*.
- [10]. Saints Cyprian of Carthage and Ambrose of Milan were his prime

models of sound ecclesiastical eloquence; Saint Hilary of Poitiers very definitely in third place.

- [11]. A rather wordy paraphrase of an excessively succinct, and hence obscure, sentence. For the thought, see Book II, 7–8 above.
- [12]. See Col 1:13.
- [13]. Here “ours” means that of the Gentile—Latin—classics.
- [14]. Literally, “by a voice of pronunciation,” *pronuntiationis voce*; presumably a technical use of the word *pronuntiatio*. Here and in the rest of this section the allusions are mostly to Cicero and Quintilian, the arch-grammarian. Most English names for the figures of speech referred to derive from the Greek rather than the Latin, and have come to signify punctuation marks, which the ancients were quite innocent of, rather than kinds of phrase.
- [15]. The first of the *kolons* that precede the round, or period.
- [16]. The first clause, or *membrum*, here is, I think, the single word *Alioquin*, Or else.
- [17]. From here on his analysis at times seems very idiosyncratic. But he was, unlike his translator, a trained rhetorician! Also, however, again unlike his translator, he did not have the benefit of punctuation in his texts.
- [18]. All he has done so far is analyze the eloquent structure of the passages quoted; he has not noted the apostle’s use of such figures of speech as irony, metaphor, hyperbole—or, in English, underand over-statement, comparisons, and so forth.
- [19]. I have supplied some such word as *existimarent*; the text does seem defective here.
- [20]. He forgets that one of his selected passages came from Romans.
- [21]. See above, Book II, 7.
- [22]. The Greek Septuagint, or LXX for short. I think this may be the only place in which he states a preference for Jerome’s Vulgate over earlier versions based on the Septuagint—perhaps as a kind of posthumous olive-branch to that redoubtable man, who had died in 420.
- [23]. Which Augustine himself, so he tells us, was all too prone to indulge. See *Confessions* X, 33.
- [24]. He is alluding to the story of Joseph and his brothers here, Gn 37,

39—45. But Amos in all probability simply meant the northern kingdom of Israel by the name “Joseph,” its two principal tribes being those descended from Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh; see Gn 48. Augustine alludes to him with a play on words which I cannot reproduce in English: *vel in malis quae pendit, vel in bonis quae rependit*. You can pay penalties in English, in the sense he uses *pendit* here, but not evils.

- [25]. Why doesn’t he know? Perhaps because it was so long since he had taught rhetoric. But this profession of ignorance is really just another device for insinuating that it is not really necessary formally to study the art of rhetoric in a school of rhetoric.
- [26]. In their *ingenia*, a word for which there seems to be no good English equivalent. These eloquent and percipient men could doubtless be reduced to Cicero and Quintilian.
- [27]. *Ad rumpenda fastidia*. I take it he is remembering his own fastidiousness as a conceited young rhetorician, which had blocked his appreciation of the scriptures, owing to the “rusticity” of their Latin.
- [28]. Reading *velandos* for the *celandos*, covering, of the text, there being, I take it, an allusion to 2 Cor 3:15.
- [29]. Following upon the law, which the prophets were sent to remind Israel of.
- [30]. Reading with M, *ea quantum possunt perspicuitate dicendi*, instead of CCL’s *et quantum possunt*. This would attach the phrase to the next clause/sentence, in which the main verb has been changed rather carelessly from the third to the first person plural.
- [31]. Cicero, *The Orator* 23, 75.
- [32]. The word “bloods,” *sanguinibus* in the Latin. In fact the translators both of the Latin from the Greek and of the Greek from the Hebrew were simply being excessively literal, and not worried very much about the result being somewhat meaningless. No doubt they assumed, as Augustine did, that this indicated the divine mysteriousness of the text, and was grist to the mill of those seeking spiritual meanings.
- [33]. A bone. As a matter of fact, Lewis & Short, under *os*, does give *ossum* as a “collateral form,” on the authority of Varro; but perhaps Varro quoted it as a vulgar solecism. Since African ears did not, as Augustine goes on to say, distinguish short from long syllables, they

might understand *os* to mean a mouth (plural *ora*) rather than a bone (plural *ossa*). See Book III, note 5, 6, and 7.

- [34]. Cicero, *The Orator* 21, 69: *ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat; docere necessitatis est, delectare suavitatis, flectere victoriae*. In fact Cicero wrote *ut probet* etc...; *probare necessitatis est*...—a slightly more stringent requirement than *docere*.
- [35]. He presumably has in mind the stylish and elegant pornography which is what much of Latin literature was, or would certainly have seemed to be in his eyes—all those passages in the Loeb editions which the translators have left untranslated.
- [36]. Cyprian, *To Donatus* 1 (3, 12–14 H)
- [37]. He is punning on the two meanings of the word *orator*; an orator and a pray-er, and its close connection with *oratio*, prayer (without the hyphen).
- [38]. A rather baffling concluding sentence, seeing that it is presumably the gospel of Jesus Christ that he has in mind. But as usual with Augustine, Christ's divinity tends to overshadow his humanity; he was not "a mere man."
- [39]. At the beginning of section 32.
- [40]. Cicero, *The Orator* 29, 101.
- [41]. *Modica*. He adds,...*hoc est, moderata. Modicis enim "modus" nomen imposuit; nam modica pro parvis abusive, non proprie dicimus*. For it is "mode" that has given its name to modest things, because we use "modest" for minor things by an abuse of language, not properly. None of this applies in English.
- [42]. Meaning both from the pulpit and from our higher official position as bishops and priests.
- [43]. Ecclesiastical judges—that is, bishops—had to hear a great deal of secular litigation, disputes about inheritances and so forth brought to them for arbitration. This was an imposition which Augustine resented deeply, but could not get out of.
- [44]. The difference between *catechesis*, or instruction, and *kerygma*, or the proclamation of the word.
- [45]. What he is saying here really only applies in the Latin. The text runs, *et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis*, translating the Greek word for word in the same order. Augustine is saying that to have written *et carnis providentiam in concupiscentiis*



*ne feceritis* would have made a more rhythmic conclusion, *clausula numerosior*.

- [46]. The word I am translating “rhythm” is *numerus*, literally number; and he is here alluding to the text of Wis 11:20.
- [47]. See the prologue to Jerome’s commentary on Job.
- [48]. *Nisi extremis partibus*. I think *extremis* must refer, so to say, to both sides of the middle, not just to the end—to the letter’s two extremes. But it is an odd expression of an extremely odd judgment.
- [49]. Letter 63 to Caecilius, 2–4: CSEL 3,702, 7–703, 8.
- [50]. See Gn 9:10–23.
- [51]. *On the Holy Spirit*, 1, prologue: PL 16, 703C -704B.
- [52]. See Jg 6:11–21.
- [53]. *On the Dress of Virgins* 3: CSEL 3,189, 11–18.
- [54]. See Lk 10:42.
- [55]. *Cum incipiet in vobis virginitas honorari*, literally, when virginity in you begins to be honored. He is clearly referring to their final crown of glory; but his implication that virginity is not being honored now is strange, since it was highly honored by Christians. But no doubt he is thinking that it is not being honored by society at large.
- [56]. *On Virgins* 2, 1, 7–8: PL 16, 209A-C.
- [57]. These two final sentences seem rather inconsequential.
- [58]. Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins*, 15–16: CSEL 3,198 -100. It is in my view to Augustine’s credit that he never stooped to this favorite theme of some preachers, from the Fathers to the present day; at least no sermon of his on the topic, to my knowledge, has survived. If he did preach any, perhaps he was rather ashamed of them, and took steps to see that they did not survive.
- [59]. Ambrose, *On Virgins*, 1, 6, 28: PL 16, 196–197.
- [60]. *Voces premit*, an allusion to Virgil’s *Aeneid* IX 324, and balanced against *sed lacrimas exprimit*.
- [61]. Modern Cherchel in western Algeria, on the coast. The event he describes took place in 418 or 419. This text, oddly enough, seems to be the only reference to it in his writings. So the event is dated from the time of his writing this fourth book of *Teaching*

*Christianity*, rather than the other way round. But in Letter 190, written in 418, he does mention that he had just been there on Church business imposed on him by Pope Zosimus.

[62]. *Caterva*. F. van der Meer, in *Augustine the Bishop* (E.T. London, 1961), 410, or rather his English translator, renders this as “the great row.” But the word means a band or crowd of people, and here possibly alludes to the inhabitants divided up into two rival bands, in what looks like having been almost a ritual blood-letting.

[63]. Would-be ecclesiastical orators.

[64]. Emending *id agere debere* of the text to *ita agere debere*. This makes it possible to treat the *Illa tria* with which the paragraph begins as the object of *agere*. If its object is *id*, then *Illa tria* is left hanging loose, with no grammatical relation to the rest of the sentence.

[65]. See Jn 14:6.

[66]. See 1 Tm 1:5; Rom 13:10.

[67]. *Si eam personam gerunt*; if they bear the *persona*, the role, or possibly the dignity, the rank—presumably of a pastor. I did wonder if this were not an early ecclesiastical use of the word *persona* in the sense that eventually resulted in the English use of the word “parson” for a beneficed clergyman, or indeed any clergyman.

[68]. See 1 Cor 1:10; Mt 23:8.

[69]. Here it looks as if he is thinking of a clergyman—a bishop, perhaps?—who has commissioned a ghost writer to write his sermons for him, not of the one who fetches down a volume of sermons by Newman, or Bossuet (Cyprian, Ambrose—or Augustine) from his library shelf.

[70]. See 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17.