218 To Curse (*Maledicere*)

Speaking evil is to be tolerated, by the example of Christ, Jer. 15[:10-11]: “All curse me, the Lord says to me.” And by the example of David,[[1]](#endnote-1) [2] Kings 16[:10] who said concerning Semei, “Let him alone and let him curse” me, etc. 1 Cor. 4[:12] they are reviled, “and we bless.” The strong movement was that saying, Matt. 5[:11]: “Blessed are you when they shall revile you,” men, namely, unjustly. Wherefore, Seneca, *De remediis fortuitorum,[[2]](#endnote-2)* men speak evil of you. And he responded, I am admonished if they murmur this with judgment, but now in sickness they do this. They know nothing except to speak well. For they do not what I merit, what they are accustomed to do.

Again, that third *Epistle to Lucilius.[[3]](#endnote-3)* What is more foolish than a man afraid of words? Wherefore Demetrius said what do I care whether men sound forth above or below from the belly. It is not filthy to be disgraced by the disgraceful. Wherefore Gregory in a gloss upon that place where David was cursed by Semei,[[4]](#endnote-4) it is just, he said, that those run through by injuries while we watch, because we deserve worse, Psal. [108:28]: “They will curse, and you will bless.”

Again, Num. 22[:11], Balaam came to curse the people of God, but God turned that into a benediction. Concerning matters of this kind speaks Eccle. 7[:22-23]: “But do not apply your heart to all words that are spoken: lest perhaps you hear your servant reviling you. For your conscience knows that you also have often spoken evil of others.” Here Gregory says, book 3, *Moralia*.[[5]](#endnote-5) And it is put in [Causa] 24, quest. 3, [c.] *Cum [sancti] viri*,[[6]](#endnote-6) Sacred Scripture calls to mind cursing in two ways, of which it approves one and damns the other. For otherwise the zeal for justice produces cursing, as is evident in Adam [Gen. 3:17]. Otherwise vindicate with malice as Paul says, [Rom. 12:14]: “Bless and curse not.” The saying of Abraham also is [Gen. 12:4]: “I will curse them that curse you.”

1. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 7.1 (8:316b): Tertium signum est opprobria et contumelias aequanimiter tolerare, exemplo David, qui cum Semei malediceret ei, dixit Abisa regem vindicre volenti: *Dimitte eum, ut maledicat mihi,* ut in libris *Regem* reperitur.... [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. L. Annaei Senecae ad Gallionem *de remediis fortuitorum* liber in F. Haase (ed.) *L. Annaei Senecae opera quae supersunt*, Leipzig, 1895 vol. 3. pp. 446-57. (p. 450): Homines de te male loquuntur: si merito, non quod loquuntur, molestum est, sed quod non mentiuntur. Si immerito, innocentia mea nunc maxime gaudeo; apparet enim illos obiecturos vera, si possent. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Seneca, *Epistula* 91.19-20 (LCL 76:444-445): Quid autem stultius homine verba metuente? Eleganter Demetrius noster solet dicere eodem loco sibi esse voces inperitorum, quo ventre redditos crepitus. “Quid enim,” inquit, “mea, susum isti an deosum sonent?” Quanta dementia est vereri, ne infameris ab infamibus?

But what is more foolish than a man afraid of words? Our friend Demetrius is wont to put it cleverly when he says: “For me the talk of ignorant men is like the rumblings which issue from the belly. For,” he adds, “what difference does it make to me whether such rumblings come from above or from below?” [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. *Glossa ordinaria* 2 Reg. 16:10 (PL 113:574-575): Dimittite. (GREG. lib. XXX Moral., cap. 9.) Qui [Col.0575A] verborum contumeliis pressus virtutem patientiae servare non potest vel sufficit, etc., usque ad quarum interventu, Deo judice, poena gravior declinatur.

Cf. Greogory, *Moralia* 30.9.37 (PL 76:545): Ut enim pauca de multis loquar, quatenus studiosus lector multa in paucis intelligat, iste, verborum contumeliis pressus, cum virtutem patientiae servare non sufficit, David factum ad memoriam [Col.0545B] reducat, quem cum tot Semei conviciis urgeret, et armati proceres ulcisci contenderent, ait: Quid mihi et vobis filii Sarviae? Dimittite eum ut maledicat; Dominus enim praecepit ei ut malediceret David; et quis est qui audeat dicere, quare sic fecerit (II Reg. XVI, 10)? Et paulo post: Dimittite eum ut maledicat juxta praeceptum Domini, si forte respiciat Dominus afflictionem meam, et reddat mihi bonum pro maledictione hac hodierna (Ibid., 12). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Greogory, *Moralia* 4.1.2 (PL 75:638-639): 2. Maledictum aliud ex judicio, aliud ex vindicta.---Sciendum vero est quod Scriptura sacra duobus modis maledictum memorat, aliud videlicet quod approbat, aliud quod damnat (24, q. 3, c. 1, can. Cum sancti). Aliter enim maledictum profertur judicio justitiae, aliter livore vindictae. Maledictum [Col.0638D] quippe judicio justitiae, ipsi primo homini peccanti prolatum est, cum audivit: Maledicta terra in opere tuo (Genes. III, 17). Maledictum justitiae judicio profertur, cum ad Abraham dicitur: Maledicam maledicentibus [Col.0639A] tibi (Genes. XII, 3). Rursum quia maledictum non judicio justitiae, sed livore vindictae promitur, voce Pauli apostoli praedicantis admonemur, qui ait: Benedicite, et nolite maledicere (Rom. XII, 14). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Decretum, Causa 24, quest. 3, c. 12: Cum sancti uiri maledictionis sentenciam proferun, non in hanc ex uoto ultionis, sed ex iusticiae examine prorumpunt. ... § 1. Scriptura sacra duobus modis maledictum memorat: aliud uidelicet, quod approbat, aliud, quod dampnat. Aliter enim maledictum profertur iudicio iusticie, ut in inpso primo peccante prolatum est, cum audiuit: “Maledicta terra in opere tuo, etc.” et sicut Abrahae dicitur: “Maledicam maledicentibus tibi.” Aliter uero profertur maledictum, quod non iudicio iusticiae, led liuore uindictae promitur, a quo uoce Pauli predicantis cessare ammonemur, qui aid: “Benedicite, et nolite maledicere.” [↑](#endnote-ref-6)