83 Correction (*Correccio*)

For more of these matters see above, chapter [26] To Accuse (*Arguere*).

Ambrose says, *Super Lucam*, c. 17[:3],[[1]](#endnote-1) a friendly correction is more profitable than a stormy accusation. For the former strikes fear, the latter moves indignation. Fear is a weak watchman. However, shame is a good watchman, for whoever fears in part is held in check, but is not corrected. But he who shames one in a certain way shows his brother mercy. Wherefore, Augustine, *Epistola* 44,[[2]](#endnote-2) the Lord’s threshing floor is not yet winnowed; it cannot be without chaff in the meanwhile. Let us pray that we may be fruitful. Wherefore, Augustine, *De verbis Domini* sermon 16,[[3]](#endnote-3) what is it that he says, If your brother has sinned against you, that is, with you alone knowing. If, therefore, only you know it and you wish to accuse him publicly, therefore you are not their corrector, but traitor.

¶ Look how the just man Joseph with how much shame that he had suspected his wife, with so much benevolence he bore to her before he knew. Wherefore, he joined with her because he saw her pregnant and he knew he had not approached her. He resisted, therefore, the certain suspicion of adultery and, however, because he alone sensed this, behold what the Gospel says, [Matt. 1:19]: “Joseph her husband, being a just man,” did not want to divulge the sorrow of a husband, he did not seek vindication, he did not want to betray the one sinning nor to punish the one sinning, therefore, “he was minded to put her away privately.”

Wherefore, Augustine says in *Epistola ad Macedon*,[[4]](#endnote-4) either by beating or by ignoring, this alone is done well if the life of men may be corrected, Isai. 38[:16]: “You shall correct me and make me to live.” Chrysostom says here, *Homelia* 24,[[5]](#endnote-5) thus one ought to proceed in correcting, first, one ought to be warned through love; second, one ought to be confounded through shame; third, one ought to be punished through rigor. Wherefore, the Orderer teaches in his *Regula*, chapter 3,[[6]](#endnote-6) just as among the grammarians, a shortened (*correpta*) syllable has one portion of time, a prolonged syllable two portions of time. Thus, spiritually the corrected (*correptus*) abbreviates for himself the penalty due for fault and does not have time for it except one prolonged time. In truth, for the future he has two times, namely, the pain of conscience in the present and the pain of hell in the future. However, Solomon puts the pain of that one who does not wish to be corrected, Prov. 29[:1]: “The man that with a stiff neck despises him that reproves him, shall suddenly be destroyed: and health shall not follow him.”

Wherefore, Augustine, *Epistola* 34,[[7]](#endnote-7) compares the incorrigible to the insane who runs onto the precipice nor does he want to be recalled. Just as it is read concerning the bull of Sclumru who because he had a tough hide, he could be captured by no chain until a ditch was prepared for him to which driven and falling in, he was captured. Thus, the hardened sinner, who will be corrected by the net of no correction, will be captured when he falls into hell. Therefore, Eccli. 3[:27] says, “A hard heart shall fear evil at the last,” about which see above in Chapter [80] Heart. The example of the sons of Heli who, because they were not corrected, perished miserably, [1 Kings 4:17]. Wherefore, Boethius, in the first book, *De disciplina scolarium*,[[8]](#endnote-8) narrated about the son of Lucrecius, a Roman Senator, who was caught in a net by many vices, so many times redeemed himself from hanging that finally weakened by penury, finally could not redeem himself. However, in seeking a kiss on the way to the gallows, he bit the nose of his father, saying, I did this to you, because you did not castigate me in my beginnings. Wherefore, in this is verified that of Eccli. 19[:5]: “He that rejoices in iniquity, shall be censured,” that is, he shall be deleted from the writings of the book of life, “and he that hates chastisement, shall have less life.” This is evident in King Achab, because he would not believe the law of the prophet, he was killed, [3] Kings 22[:35].

Wherefore, Bede, *Super Epistola Petri*,[[9]](#endnote-9) says he who is just suffers to imitate Christ. He who is corrected in whips imitates the thief to the right of Christ. He who among the whips does not desist from faults imitates the thief to the left. Wherefore, Chrysostom, Homilia 33, in *Imperfectis super Mattheum*,[[10]](#endnote-10) this is the characteristic of good and evil men. The good caught in sin groans because he has sinned. The evil, however, caught rages, not because he has sinned, but because he has been caught in sin.

¶ Example of the domestic animal, that if for some time it was being vagabond and wandered outside the house, but when it comes to the hand of its lord, as if in remembrance of former times, is it not quickly tamed? Others, however, of the forest when one of them is caught, it is either because it seeks a bit of food or it is unwilling because of man’s footsteps. So also, the evil man corrected, either he does not do penance, or rather he is wrathful being uncorrected. Finally, however, in the whole process of fraternal correction, this is to be held according to Chrysostom, the first homily in the *Imperfectis,[[11]](#endnote-11)* the jurors are uncertain whether it is better that a harlot escapes than that an innocent person is put to death.

¶ For it is just that the guilty should justly escape than that a just man unjustly should perish, [Matt. 1:19], Joseph doubting concerning the conception of Mary, “was minded to put her away privately,” as it was evident above. Therefore, let there be love, but not being soft; let there be rigor, but not being rough; let there be zeal, but not immoderate severity; let there be piety, but not more than is expedient for forgiving, as Gregory says in *Moralia* 31.[[12]](#endnote-12) For [2] Mach. 6[:12], that they be not shocked “at these calamities,” but that they consider the things that happened, “not as being for the destruction, but for the correction of our nation.”

¶ And for a great deal of time to act not without sins out of the judgment, but immediately it is the judgment to inhibit the flatteries of the great beneficiary. Wherefore, Peter of Blois says[[13]](#endnote-13) that Nabal after his reminding is read to have been worse, [1] Kings 25[:10]. And Pharaoh was more obstinate, Exod. 7[:13]. Manasses from his correction came to his senses for penance, [2 Paralip. 33:12]. Balaam from the voice of his ass recalled his proposal of doing evil, Num. 22[:12]. Wherefore, Psal. [38:12]: “The strength of your hand has made me faint in rebukes.” Like a weak man receiving a strong medicine withdraws under the hand of the doctor, so one strongly chided so that he can hardly bear it, Psal. [38:12]: “You have corrected man for iniquity.” From which it is understood that the unpunished ought to be corrected less. A superior can exceed in scolding. Wherefore, Augustine, *Epistola* 71,[[14]](#endnote-14) concerning the mouth of some man that spoke the truth to us, not by another man, who perhaps is a sinner, but by that truth, which is Christ, we were justly improved.

1. Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 8.21 (PL 15.1771): Plus enim proficiat amica correptio, quam accusatio turbulenta: illa pudorem incutit, haec indignationem movet. Servetur potius quod prodi metuat, qui monetur. Bonum quippe est ut amicum magis te qui corripitur credat, quam inimicum: facilius enim consiliis acquiescitur, quam injuriae succumbitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *Epistula* 23.6 (PL 33.97): Area dominica nondum ventilata est; sine paleis esse non potest. Nos oremus, atque agamus quantum possumus, ut frumentum simus. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Sermo* 82.7 (PL 38.510): Intendite, et videte: Si peccaverit, inquit, in te frater tuus, corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum. Quare? Quia peccavit in te. Quid est, in te peccavit? Tu scis quia peccavit. Quia enim secretum fuit, quando in te peccavit; secretum quaere, cum corrigis quod peccavit. Nam si solus nosti quia peccavit in te, et eum vis coram omnibus arguere; non es correptor, sed proditor. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *Epistola* 153.6.19 (PL 33.662): Ita formidabitur ultio cognitoris, ut nec intercessoris religio contemnatur; quia et plectendo et ignoscendo hoc solum bene agitur, ut vita hominum corrigatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. John Chrysostom, *Homelia I-XXV in Matthaeum Aniano interprete* (1503) Homelia 23 ex cap. 6, folio 63v (Page 125): Verum non usque ad correptionem tantummodo sermone progressus est: sed cum eos seuerius castigasset: perque hoc etiam suscitasset plurimumque in eis succendisset pudorem consequenter illos aliunde solatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ordine, *Regula,* cf. Rabanus Maurus, *Excerptio de arte grammatica Prisciani* De syllaba (PL 111:618-622). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, *Epistola,* 93.1.2 (PL 33:322):Istos ergo atroces quondam inimicos nostros, pacem et quietem nostram variis violentiarum et insidiarum generibus gravibus graviter infestantes, si sic contemneremus et toleraremus, ut nihil omnino quod ad eos terrendos ac corrigendos valere posset, excogitaretur et ageretur a nobis, vere malum pro malo redderemus. Si enim quisquam inimicum suum periculosis febribus phreneticum factum, currere videret in praeceps, nonne tunc potius malum pro malo redderet, si eum sic currere permitteret, quam si corripiendum ligandumque curaret? [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Boethius, *De disciplina scholarum* 2 (PL 64.1227): Contumelioso coitus appetitu sanguineum Lucretii filium, Zenonisque discipulum tota Roma flevit inviscatum, qui tamen clarissimis ortus fuit natalibus, quantitatis procerae et sanguineae qualitatis, mirae siquidem eloquentiae, perspicacis ingenii, sed quotidianis et ultra debitum nuptiis gaudebat, patre poenam deferente, patrimonium enim parentumque census illicite consumebat, cunctisque zelotypis eminebat. Aleis autem et meretricum cellulis semper inhiabat. Proprio autem adhuc non destitutus pruritu, postea a parentibus ejectus, tandem ab amicis et consortibus destitutus, a creditoribus undique fatigatus, notis et ignotis furtim studuit assitere, crucis ab angustiis a patre creberrime redemptus, ultimo tamen parentis pecunia redimi non potuit. Cruci ergo adductus eumdem ad se venire lacrymis compellebat, osculumque voce querula petebat. Pietatis autem motio ad filii petitionem patrem erexit, erectique filius nasum morsu secuit acutissimo dicens: Quare a meis primis erroribus incastigatus evasi? Utquid magistri mei documentis non obedivi, sociosque meos contempsi? Filii patrem necesse est indulgere castigationi, magistrumque discipuli mores informare. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Bede, *In Primam Epistolam Petri* 3 (PL 93/57-58): Qui ergo justus patitur, Christum imitatur; qui in flagellis corrigitur, latronem, qui in cruce Christum cognovit, et a cruce paradisum cum Christo intravit; qui nec inter flagella desistit a culpis, sinistrum imitatur latronem. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 39 in caput 21:28 (PG 56:848-849): haec est enim proprietas bonorum hominum et malorum. Bonus enim comprehensus in peccato, ingemiscit, quia peccavit; malus autem comprehensus, fremit, non quia peccavit, sed quia comprehensus in peccato. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* Homilia 1 ex cap. 1:19 (PG 56:633): Dimittam eam oculte: quia in re incerta melius est, ut meretrix constituta evadat, quam ut innocens moriatur: Justius eanim est, injustum juste evadere quam justum injuste perire. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Gregory, *Moralia* 20.5.14 (PL 76.144): Sit itaque amor, sed non emolliens; sit vigor, sed non exasperans; sit zelus, sed non immoderate saeviens; sit pietas, sed non plus quam expediat parcens. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Peter Blessensis, *Epistola* 159 (PL 207:454): Nabal ex commonitione legitur deterior, Pharao pertinacior. Manasses ex correptione resipuit, Balaam ex asini loquela maledicendi revocavit propositum. Moyses ad monitionem Jethro publicae administrationis officia consultius dispensavit. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Augustine, *Epistola* 33.3 (PL 33.130): Itaque de cujuslibet hominis ore nobis verum cum aliqua asperitate sonuerit, non ab illo homine, qui forte peccator est, sed ab ipsa Veritate, hoc est a Christo, qui justus est, emendamur. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)