



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI JESUM

DEDICATED TO MARY MOTHER OF GOD

www.boston-catholic-journal.com
editor@boston-catholic-journal.com

THE SIN OF ANGER

and the Pedigree of our Malice

Wrath is one of the Seven Deadly Sins — sins that, consequent to them, engender *other* sins.

Fundamentally, the sin of Anger is a rebellion against God.

It occurs when our will is frustrated and does not attain to its end. It is the *disordered will* inasmuch as it understands the self, and not God, as the end of a proposed or desired state of affairs. The fulfillment of the will of God is the greatest good possible for the human soul, which is to say that God is properly the end of all willing in man. Wrath is the violent rejection of God's will in preference to the unrestrained will of

the self apart from God. Indeed, the expression of wrath or anger is the most explicit denial of the sovereignty of God over all things at all times. It is the preference of one's own will to the will of God, which, as we have said, is the greatest good possible. The human will that is one with the will of God is the attainment of holiness. It is *union* with God, and as such, the perfection of the soul. It is the *speculum Dei*, the perfect reflection of God in Whose image man is not just fundamentally, but in the Order of Being, ontologically created.

In all things we must discern the will of God — and do it. If it coincides with our own desires, that is an indication of the soul's progress to union with God. If it does not, and we repudiate our own will in preference (and obedience) to the will of God, that is even greater progress to union with God.

Once we come to understand that nothing — absolutely nothing — that touches upon us, happens to us, afflicts us or consoles us, occurs except that God either wills it or permits it for our good, however remote our apprehension of it, however implausible, or even impossible the consequences may appear to us. It is not within the provenance of man to see, let alone comprehend, that infinite reticulation of the fabric of the universe, at the intersections of which we would find the will of God intelligibly impressed.

A Paradigm

In the physical sciences today we often hear of things measured in terms of nanometers (1/1-billionth of a meter). 2-billion-600-million (2,600,000,000) transistors are, as of this writing, on Intel's 10-Core Xeon Westmere-EX microprocessor using a 32-nanometer manufacturing process. This is the mind of man, the design of mere man. The relationship of one single transistor to the 2 billion-600-million others, wherever their placement in the array, is such that the whole depends on the one and the one on the whole.

We nod our heads in agreement and are amazed at the staggering numbers involved and the sophisticated technology together with the intelligent design that coordinated all 2 billion-600-million transistors to a purposeful end — **and yet we are skeptical that *God orders all things, however remote our understanding of them, however utterly inaccessible, even impossible to our comprehension — to a good and coherent end because we cannot perceive it in the moment ... or even in a lifetime?***

Were you to count up to 2 billion-600-million, by the second around the clock, it would take you over 82 years — which, according to actuarial tables, exceeds the anticipated lifetime of any man or woman — and all this on a man-made microprocessor less than the size of your thumbnail.

The material universe is a nearly infinite reticulation woven by God and multiplied exponentially by time through what was, is, and will be. It is ordered as God wills — not as we will.

Anger, then, is a rebellion against the will of God which is always consummately good. It has no lasting place in the heart of a Catholic. Irascibility (the predisposition or susceptibility to anger) as one of the Capital or Deadly Sins, is indeed the progenitor of other sins and other evils. It presumes to know the good with greater perspicacity than God and as such is latently a claim to superiority over God.

The Aftermath of Anger

Anger is the father of mayhem and murder. It was so from the beginning: through anger Cain rose up and slew Abel. It is expressed in impatience, pride (as the absence of humility) and selfishness. It is the violent frustration with a world that is not amenable to the selfish will, and in this sense it would be the "creator" of the world around it, a world in perfect conformity to its own will. In this sense it is the inclination to

usurp the creative order of God. Instead of bending the will to God, it attempts to bend the world to itself — and God with it.

Anger expresses itself in destruction — of relationships, communities, even nations. It descends to depth of demonic rage. Hell, I am convinced, is infinitely more than the loss of all hope. It is the unremitting experience of eternal anger culminating in violent, unrelenting rage; rage against God, and all who are, and all that is. The contorted, frightening, and ugly face of anger is the baleful image of the demonic, a harbinger of things to come for those who do not submit themselves to God, like the father of lies and murder who in the primordial beginning first set his will against God.

Let it not be said of us, "**You are of your father the devil he was a murderer from the beginning, and ... a liar, and the father thereof.**" (St. John 8.44)

Anger — stamp it out within yourself, and give it no quarter. Like Saint Stephen, the first Martyr for Christ and His Church, let your countenance be as the "**face of an angel**" (Acts 6.15) even amid your tormentors — and not the menacing face of the demons.

Choose then, whom you will be like ... and where, as a consequence, you are likely to go.

Editor
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Reply by a Poor Clare Nun:

I think you could do a Part II, addressing the notion of *righteous* anger. Injustice, cruelty, etc. can provoke anger, very passionate anger in fact,

and this type of anger can be channeled for good. There are some situations in life that, without a degree of anger, nothing would change or be rectified and one would be impotent to do anything.

The type of anger you are referring to is that *unbridled* anger which is always a sister to self-righteousness.

And as it says in our Holy Rule, anger impedes the work of the Holy Spirit. How true that is: an angry person is never listening to anyone but themselves.

Sister MB

Editor's Response:

It is forthcoming, dear Sister; especially concerning the righteous anger of God, a much neglected and, in prevailing liberal neo-theological schools (which is to say, virtual all present Catholic institutions of learning), an “incorrect” and deeply misunderstood attribute of God that is something of an archaic solecism, an embarrassment. That this remarkably convenient theology does not concur with Sacred Scripture, the Patristic Fathers, and Sacred Tradition, is apparently of little concern.

Geoffrey K. Mondello
Editor
Boston Catholic Journal



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