



The Sin of Anger and the Pedigree of our Malice

The Sin of Anger: *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.

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 disavow 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 to our understanding, however 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, would exceed the anticipated lifetime of any man or woman — and all this on a man-made microprocessor less than the size of your hand.

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 the 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: 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, "Vos ex patre diabolo estis ... ille homicida erat ab initio et ... mendax est et pater eius." "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, 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.

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