

Objection 1. It would seem that the species of anger are unsuitably assigned by the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 5) where he says that some angry persons are “choleric,” some “sullen,” and some “ill-tempered” or “stern.” According to him, a person is said to be “sullen” whose anger “is appeased with difficulty and endures a long time.” But this apparently pertains to the circumstance of time. Therefore it seems that anger can be differentiated specifically in respect also of the other circumstances.

Objection 2. Further, he says (Ethic. iv, 5) that “ill-tempered” or “stern” persons “are those whose anger is not appeased without revenge, or punishment.” Now this also pertains to the unquenchableness of anger. Therefore seemingly the ill-tempered is the same as bitterness.

Objection 3. Further, our Lord mentions three degrees of anger, when He says (Mat. 5:22): “Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say” to his brother, “Thou fool.” But these degrees are not referable to the aforesaid species. Therefore it seems that the above division of anger is not fitting.

On the contrary, Gregory of Nyssa* says “there are three species of irascibility,” namely, “the anger which is called wrath[†],” and “ill-will” which is a disease of the mind, and “rancour.” Now these three seem to coincide with the three aforesaid. For “wrath” he describes as “having beginning and movement,” and the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 5) ascribes this to “choleric” persons: “ill-will” he describes as “an anger that endures and grows old,” and this the Philosopher ascribes to “sullenness”; while he describes “rancour” as “reckoning the time for vengeance,” which tallies with the Philosopher’s description of the “ill-tempered.” The same division is given by Damascene (De Fide Orth. ii, 16). Therefore the aforesaid division assigned by the Philosopher is not unfitting.

I answer that, The aforesaid distinction may be referred either to the passion, or to the sin itself of anger. We have already stated when treating of the passions (Ia IIae, q. 46, a. 8) how it is to be applied to the passion of anger. And it would seem that this is chiefly what Gregory of Nyssa and Damascene had in view. Here, however, we have to take the distinction of these species in its application to the sin of anger, and as set down by the Philosopher.

For the inordinateness of anger may be considered in relation to two things. First, in relation to the origin of anger, and this regards “choleric” persons, who are angry too quickly and for any slight cause. Secondly, in

relation to the duration of anger, for that anger endures too long; and this may happen in two ways. In one way, because the cause of anger, to wit, the inflicted injury, remains too long in a man’s memory, the result being that it gives rise to a lasting displeasure, wherefore he is “grievous” and “sullen” to himself. In another way, it happens on the part of vengeance, which a man seeks with a stubborn desire: this applies to “ill-tempered” or “stern” people, who do not put aside their anger until they have inflicted punishment.

Reply to Objection 1. It is not time, but a man’s propensity to anger, or his pertinacity in anger, that is the chief point of consideration in the aforesaid species.

Reply to Objection 2. Both “sullen” and “ill-tempered” people have a long-lasting anger, but for different reasons. For a “sullen” person has an abiding anger on account of an abiding displeasure, which he holds locked in his breast; and as he does not break forth into the outward signs of anger, others cannot reason him out of it, nor does he of his own accord lay aside his anger, except his displeasure wear away with time and thus his anger cease. On the other hand, the anger of “ill-tempered” persons is long-lasting on account of their intense desire for revenge, so that it does not wear out with time, and can be quelled only by revenge.

Reply to Objection 3. The degrees of anger mentioned by our Lord do not refer to the different species of anger, but correspond to the course of the human act[‡]. For the first degree is an inward conception, and in reference to this He says: “Whosoever is angry with his brother.” The second degree is when the anger is manifested by outward signs, even before it breaks out into effect; and in reference to this He says: “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca!” which is an angry exclamation. The third degree is when the sin conceived inwardly breaks out into effect. Now the effect of anger is another’s hurt under the aspect of revenge; and the least of hurts is that which is done by a mere word; wherefore in reference to this He says: “Whosoever shall say to his brother Thou fool!” Consequently it is clear that the second adds to the first, and the third to both the others; so that, if the first is a mortal sin, in the case referred to by our Lord, as stated above (a. 3, ad 2), much more so are the others. Wherefore some kind of condemnation is assigned as corresponding to each one of them. In the first case “judgment” is assigned, and this is the least severe, for as Augustine says[§], “where judgment is to be delivered, there is an opportunity for defense”: in the second case “council” is assigned, “whereby the judges deliberate together on the punishment to be inflicted”: to the third case is assigned “hell-fire,” i.e. “decisive condemnation.”

* Nemesius, De Nat. Hom. xxi † ‘Fellea,’ i.e. like gall. But in Ia IIae, q. 46, a. 8, St. Thomas quoting the same authority has *Cholos* which we render ‘wrath’ ‡ Cf. Ia IIae, q. 46, a. 8, obj. 3 § Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 9