

Objection 1. It would seem that the sin against the Holy Ghost is not the same as the sin committed through certain malice. Because the sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of blasphemy, according to Mat. 12:32. But not every sin committed through certain malice is a sin of blasphemy: since many other kinds of sin may be committed through certain malice. Therefore the sin against the Holy Ghost is not the same as the sin committed through certain malice.

Objection 2. Further, the sin committed through certain malice is condivided with sin committed through ignorance, and sin committed through weakness: whereas the sin against the Holy Ghost is condivided with the sin against the Son of Man (Mat. 12:32). Therefore the sin against the Holy Ghost is not the same as the sin committed through certain malice, since things whose opposites differ, are themselves different.

Objection 3. Further, the sin against the Holy Ghost is itself a generic sin, having its own determinate species: whereas sin committed through certain malice is not a special kind of sin, but a condition or general circumstance of sin, which can affect any kind of sin at all. Therefore the sin against the Holy Ghost is not the same as the sin committed through certain malice.

On the contrary, The Master says (Sent. ii, D, 43) that “to sin against the Holy Ghost is to take pleasure in the malice of sin for its own sake.” Now this is to sin through certain malice. Therefore it seems that the sin committed through certain malice is the same as the sin against the Holy Ghost.

I answer that, Three meanings have been given to the sin against the Holy Ghost. For the earlier doctors, viz. Athanasius (Super Matth. xii, 32), Hilary (Can. xii in Matth.), Ambrose (Super Luc. xii, 10), Jerome (Super Matth. xii), and Chrysostom (Hom. xli in Matth.), say that the sin against the Holy Ghost is literally to utter a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whether by Holy Spirit we understand the essential name applicable to the whole Trinity, each Person of which is a Spirit and is holy, or the personal name of one of the Persons of the Trinity, in which sense blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is distinct from the blasphemy against the Son of Man (Mat. 12:32), for Christ did certain things in respect of His human nature, by eating, drinking, and such like actions, while He did others in respect of His Godhead, by casting out devils, raising the dead, and the like: which things He did both by the power of His own Godhead and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, of Whom He was full, according to his human nature. Now the Jews began by speaking blasphemy against the Son of Man, when they said (Mat. 11:19) that He was “a glutton...a wine drinker,” and a

“friend of publicans”: but afterwards they blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, when they ascribed to the prince of devils those works which Christ did by the power of His own Divine Nature and by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Augustine, however (De Verb. Dom., Serm. lxxi), says that blasphemy or the sin against the Holy Ghost, is final impenitence when, namely, a man perseveres in mortal sin until death, and that it is not confined to utterance by word of mouth, but extends to words in thought and deed, not to one word only, but to many. Now this word, in this sense, is said to be uttered against the Holy Ghost, because it is contrary to the remission of sins, which is the work of the Holy Ghost, Who is the charity both of the Father and of the Son. Nor did Our Lord say this to the Jews, as though they had sinned against the Holy Ghost, since they were not yet guilty of final impenitence, but He warned them, lest by similar utterances they should come to sin against the Holy Ghost: and it is in this sense that we are to understand Mark 3:29,30, where after Our Lord had said: “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost,” etc. the Evangelist adds, “because they said: He hath an unclean spirit.”

But others understand it differently, and say that the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, is a sin committed against that good which is appropriated to the Holy Ghost: because goodness is appropriated to the Holy Ghost, just a power is appropriated to the Father, and wisdom to the Son. Hence they say that when a man sins through weakness, it is a sin “against the Father”; that when he sins through ignorance, it is a sin “against the Son”; and that when he sins through certain malice, i.e. through the very choosing of evil, as explained above (Ia IIae, q. 78, Aa. 1, 3), it is a sin “against the Holy Ghost.”

Now this may happen in two ways. First by reason of the very inclination of a vicious habit which we call malice, and, in this way, to sin through malice is not the same as to sin against the Holy Ghost. In another way it happens that by reason of contempt, that which might have prevented the choosing of evil, is rejected or removed; thus hope is removed by despair, and fear by presumption, and so on, as we shall explain further on (Qq. 20,21). Now all these things which prevent the choosing of sin are effects of the Holy Ghost in us; so that, in this sense, to sin through malice is to sin against the Holy Ghost.

Reply to Objection 1. Just as the confession of faith consists in a protestation not only of words but also of deeds, so blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can be uttered in word, thought and deed.

Reply to Objection 2. According to the third interpretation, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is condivided

with blasphemy against the Son of Man, forasmuch as He is also the Son of God, i.e. the “power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). Wherefore, in this sense, the sin against the Son of Man will be that which is committed through ignorance, or through weakness.

Reply to Objection 3. Sin committed through certain malice, in so far as it results from the inclination of a habit, is not a special sin, but a general condition of sin:

whereas, in so far as it results from a special contempt of an effect of the Holy Ghost in us, it has the character of a special sin. According to this interpretation the sin against the Holy Ghost is a special kind of sin, as also according to the first interpretation: whereas according to the second, it is not a species of sin, because final impenitence may be a circumstance of any kind of sin.