

## JESUS' PROHIBITION OF ANGER (MT 5:22): THE PERSON/SIN DISTINCTION FROM AUGUSTINE TO AQUINAS

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*Christian reflection on the morality of anger must address Jesus' words in Matthew 5:22: "whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." One interpretation of this passage found in the Christian tradition relies on what is called here the "person/sin distinction": anger at persons is sinful, while anger at sin is permissible. The article traces this distinction's use from Augustine to Aquinas, both to display a living textual tradition at work and to contribute to the broader question of the possibility of virtuous Christian anger.*

JESUS' WORDS IN MATTHEW 5:22, "whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment," appear unequivocal.<sup>1</sup> Anger should have no place in the Christian life. Yet a survey of thinkers in the Christian tradition

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<sup>1</sup> The New American Bible translation, used for Roman Catholic liturgies in the United States, reads: "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna" (Mt 5:21–22). Gender exclusive language is used in this article only where quoted from such a translation. The Vulgate text of Matthew 5:21–22, employed by Thomas, reads: *audistis quia dictum est antiquis non occides qui autem occiderit reus erit iudicio ego autem dico vobis quia omnis qui irascitur fratri suo reus erit iudicio qui autem dixerit fratri suo racha reus erit concilio qui autem dixerit fatue reus erit gehennae ignis.*

from Augustine and Jerome to Thomas Aquinas reveals that interpretation of this passage, always a starting point for addressing the broader question of the morality of anger in the Christian life, is not straightforward. The present study began as research into the possibility of virtuous anger in the thought of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>2</sup> What emerged were two distinct lines of argument, both in support of the possibility of virtuous anger. One of the two lines relies on a literal reading of Matthew 5:22 to make what is called here the “person/sin distinction”: anger at persons is always sinful, while anger at sin is virtuous. This is a central argument in support of virtuous anger in Aquinas’s *Quaestio disputata de malo*. The seeds of the second line of argument justifying some anger are also evident in *De malo*, but that line of thought is found more fully developed—to the complete exclusion of the first line of argument—in the *Summa theologiae*, as well as in the *Collationes in decem preceptis* and *Lectura super Matthaeum*. Due to established scholarly consensus on the dating of the latter work (especially the *Summa*), it appears that this second line of argument represents Thomas’s most mature thought on the subject. His apparent shift in argument to justify some types of anger prompts questions that engender the present study: what is the source of the person/sin distinction used in *De malo* to justify a certain kind of anger based on a particular literal reading of Matthew 5:22? Why did Thomas ultimately decide to drop this line of argument?

Study of Thomas’s *Cantena aurea* reveals that he received the person/sin

<sup>2</sup> The breadth and depth of Thomas’s thought on the emotions in general and anger in particular are unprecedented in the Christian (arguably Western) moral tradition—and possibly unmatched since. For synthetic overviews of the claims and significance of Thomas’s thought on the passions, see Servais Pinckaers, O.P., “Les passions et la morale,” *Révue scholastique de philosophie et théologie* 74 (1991) 379–91; Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ’s Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002); and Mark Jordan, “Aquinas’ Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33 (1986) 71–91. Other studies of Thomas’s work on the passions include: Judith Barad, “Aquinas on the Role of Emotion in Moral Judgment and Activity,” *Thomist* 55 (1991) 397–413; Eric D’Arcy, introduction to *Summa theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation . . .* (Cambridge, UK: Blackfriars, 1967) xix–xxxii; G. Simon Harak, S.J., *Virtuous Passions* (New York: Paulist, 1993); Susan James, *Passion and Action* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Anthony John Patrick Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1963); Peter King, “Aquinas on the Passions,” in *Aquinas’ Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzman*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1998) 101–32; Richard Mansfield, “Antecedent Passion and the Moral Quality of Human Acts according to St. Thomas,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71, Suppl. (1997) 221–31; J. Giles Milhaven, *Good Anger* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1989); Kevin White, “The Passions of the Soul,” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington: Georgetown University, 2002) 103–12.

distinction from Augustine. After Augustine, the distinction was launched into the tradition and, mainly through the *glossa ordinaria*, was employed by numerous Scholastics. Finally, it was adopted and ultimately rejected in the work of Thomas. My article, a study of the use of the person/sin distinction to interpret Matthew 5:22, proceeds in three sections: the birth of the person/sin distinction with Augustine, its life in the works of Christian thinkers for nearly a millennium, and its ultimate rejection by Aquinas.<sup>3</sup> My purpose is neither to write a history of interpretation of Matthew 5:22 throughout the Christian tradition, nor to provide a comprehensive study of the morality of anger, topics both well beyond the scope of this space. Rather, my more modest purpose is twofold. First, I trace the “life story” of the person/sin distinction concerning Matthew 5:22 from Augustine to Thomas, a story, interesting in itself, that enables readers to see great minds at work in expounding the Scriptures for practical moral guidance and thereby contributing to a living textual tradition. Second, given the subject matter of Matthew 5:22, how thinkers have used the person/sin distinction to differentiate vicious from virtuous anger offers a lens through which to clearly see their understandings of the broader question of the morality of anger. My study into different uses, and ultimately Thomas’s rejection, of the distinction helps identify certain key questions concerning anger—in particular how it can be distinguished from hatred and whether it can be shaped by human reasoning—in a manner that contributes to the broader moral question of the possibility of virtuous anger.

### AUGUSTINE'S INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' PROHIBITION OF ANGER IN MATTHEW 5:22

In his *De sermone domini in monte*, Augustine examines the morality of anger when exegeting Matthew 5:22. His “Old Latin” (i.e., pre-Vulgate) version of the biblical text reads: “he who is angry at his brother *without cause* is liable to judgment.”<sup>4</sup> The phrase “without cause” is crucial. It precludes any discussion in *De sermone* over whether there can be virtuous

<sup>3</sup> The chronology of this study ends with Aquinas. Given the argument below in support of his reasons for rejecting this distinction, no survey of the use of that distinction after Thomas is offered here. Moreover, I limit myself to the history of the distinction between Augustine and Thomas; I therefore do not treat all of Thomas’s sources on anger, such as the Damascene, Gregory the Great, and Peter Lombard, since they do not use the distinction.

<sup>4</sup> See Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte libros duos, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (hereafter CCSL), vol. 35, ed. Almut Mutzenbecher (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1967) 23: *quia omnis qui irascitur fratri suo sine causa, reus erit*. See also the English translation of Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*,

anger. By decrying anger “without cause,” Jesus appears to grant that there may indeed be anger with cause. What exactly constitutes justifiable cause is not examined by Augustine here, but he observes that it is just such anger that Paul levels at the Galatians when he calls them fools (Gal 3:1), an act that clearly would have been otherwise prohibited by Jesus who explicitly denounces one who says “you fool” out of anger.<sup>5</sup> Thus Augustine spends most of his time on Matthew 5:22 discussing the rationale behind the remainder of the verse’s ascending hierarchy of punishments. Since it is clear to Augustine that the third punishment mentioned is the worst (being liable to fiery Gehenna), he concludes that the three punishments are sequential. After explaining the difference between the first punishment (being liable to judgment) and the second (being answerable to the Sanhedrin), he correlates the three increasingly severe punishments to the increasingly complete outward manifestations of anger: from anger alone, to anger prompting unintelligible utterance (“Raga!”), to anger leading to the verbal assault, “You fool!”

### The Birth of a Distinction

By the time Augustine wrote his *Retractiones*<sup>6</sup> 30 years later, he had become aware that, unlike the Old Latin Gospel text he cited in *De sermone*, the original Greek Gospel text did not contain the qualifier “without cause.”<sup>7</sup> This exclusion would appear to eliminate the possibility of virtuous anger. After all, if Jesus’ words were “he who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment,” it would seem that there is no proper role for anger in the Christian life. Indeed, this is the line of interpretation offered by Jerome in his own *Commentarius in evangelium secundum Matthaëum*. Jerome observes that certain texts add “without cause,” but claims that, since this phrase is inauthentic, the precept against anger is unqualified. He

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Ancient Christian Writers 5, trans., intro., and notes John J. Jepson (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1948) 1.9 (which is used here with emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> The NAB translation of Galatians 3:1 reads, “O stupid Galatians!” The Vulgate reads: “o insensati Galatae.”

<sup>6</sup> According to Peter Brown, Augustine wrote his *Retractiones* in 426 to 427. *De sermone* was written in 394. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967) 378, 76.

<sup>7</sup> The passage under consideration here is the first of the six *antitheses* in the sermon on the mount (Mt 5:21–48). The Old Latin version of this text, which Augustine used in *De sermone*, was the standard Latin translation of the Bible prior to Jerome’s translation, the Vulgate. As noted below, the Old Latin text contained the qualifier “without cause” in reference to anger in Matthew 5:22. Jerome realized that *sine causa* was added later and thus did not include it in his translation. It is Augustine’s realization of this omission that occasions his reexamination of the passage.

reasons that if we are to turn the other cheek, love our enemies, and pray for our persecutors, any occasion for anger is removed.<sup>8</sup>

However, this is conspicuously *not* Augustine's conclusion. After acknowledging that the earlier Greek texts lack the phrase "without cause," he nevertheless claims that the meaning of this passage remains the same as his earlier interpretation in *De sermone*. He reasons as follows: the authentic text does indeed exclude "without cause," but the phrase "whoever is angry *with his brother* is liable to judgment" contains the sense of "without cause," because one is not angry *with one's brother* when one is angry *at the sin* of one's brother. Augustine concludes that therefore the one who is angry at the sin of the brother, and not at the brother himself, does not sin and thus has anger with cause.<sup>9</sup> It is only anger *with one's brother* that is condemned by Jesus in this passage.

Given the unique genre of *Retractiones* as a late-in-life review and revision of earlier writings, one could reason that this passage is less indicative of a well-thought-out position of Augustine on anger than it is a hasty editing of earlier writing.<sup>10</sup> Yet the presence of this same person/sin distinction in Augustine's *De civitate dei* suggests otherwise. There Augustine claims, "a man does not say to his brother, 'You fool!' when he says it in hostility to his brother's sins, not to his brother as brother (for in the latter case he would be liable to the fire of hell)."<sup>11</sup> The corroboration of Au-

<sup>8</sup> Jerome's *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*, CCSL 77, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1969) 27–28: *Omnis qui irascitur fratri suo. In quibusdam codicibus additur: sine causa. Ceterum in ueris definita sententia est et ira penitus tollitur, scriptum dicente: Qui irascitur fratri suo. Si enim iubemur uerberanti alteram praeberere maxillam et inimicos nostros amare et orare pro persequentibus, omnis irae occasio tollitur. Radendum est ergo: sine causa, quia ira uiri iustitiam Dei non operator. For more on Jerome's thought on passion, see Richard A. Layton, "From 'Holy Passion' to Sinful Emotion: Jerome and the Doctrine of Propassio," in *In Dominico Eloquio = In Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. Paul M. Blowers, et al. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002) 280–93.*

<sup>9</sup> See Augustine's *Retractionum Libri II*, CCSL 57 (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1984) 57: *Illud etiam melius intelleximus postea quod scriptum est: Qui irascitur fratri suo. Codices enim Greci non habent sine causa, sicut hic positum est, quamuis idem ipse sit sensus. Illud enim diximus intuendum, quid sit irasci fratri suo, quoniam non fratri irascitur, qui peccato fratris irascitur. Qui ergo fratri non peccato irascitur, sine causa irascitur.*

<sup>10</sup> For more on the circumstances of Augustine's writing his *Retractiones*, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* 428–30.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 2 vols., CCSL 47 and 48 (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1955) 802: *Sicut ergo non fratri suo dicit: Fatue, qui cum hoc dicit non ipsi fraternitati, sed peccato eius infensus est (alioquin reus erit gehennae ignis).* See also the English translation, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 1972) 21.27.

gustine's *Retractiones* person/sin distinction in another prominent work indicates that his use of the distinction was not merely a hasty addition found only in *Retractiones* to justify the *De sermone* position on anger that was substantiated using an inauthentic text.

The story of the change in Augustine's interpretation of Matthew 5:22 and of his differences with Jerome is interesting in its own right. But for the purposes of this article the importance of Augustine's interpretation is that it launches a new distinction into the Christian tradition's treatment of the morality of anger. Augustine's attraction to this distinction is obvious. It allows for virtuous anger even while respecting the literal sense of Christ's words in Matthew 5:22. It locates in Jesus' own words a simple way to distinguish virtuous from vicious anger.

### Hints of Problems with the Person/Sin Distinction

There are, however, problems with the person/sin distinction. In *De sermone*, where Augustine had not yet seen the need for the distinction, given his defective biblical translation, he examines the mote and beam passage found at Matthew 7:3. There he likens anger to the mote, and hatred to the beam. He claims that anger and hatred, though in some ways similar, must be distinguished. He explicitly claims that one may be angry "at a person" and yet also wish for that person's amendment, but this is not the case with hatred.<sup>12</sup> Note here it is anger "at a person" that is compatible with charity. It would seem that for Augustine, *pace* Jerome, one can indeed be angry at a person and still love that person. Indeed, in the later *De civitate dei* Augustine decries anger at inanimate objects and, while doing so, clearly reveals that he thinks anger is appropriately aimed at persons.<sup>13</sup> In both of these cases Augustine is clearly justifying anger at a person rather than at the person's sin. Thus as early as Augustine's own *De sermone* there are already claims made about anger, and especially its relation to hatred, that are inconsistent with his later attempts to justify some anger as virtuous using the person/sin distinction.

Furthermore, other resources in Augustine's thought allow a more precise delineation of virtuous anger. In *De civitate dei* he claims that Christians determine the morality of an emotion like anger by examining the

<sup>12</sup> See Augustine, *De sermone domini in monte*, CCSL 35:159–60: "Fieri avtem potest vt, si irascaris homini, uelis eum corrigi; si avtem oderis hominem, non potes eum velle corrigere." See also Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* 2.19: "Again, it is quite possible that in becoming angry with a person you actually wish for his amendment; however, if you hate a person, you cannot wish to change him for the better."

<sup>13</sup> See *De civitate dei* 14.15, CCSL 48:438: "rebus inanimis irascitur."

“object.” “In fact, in our discipline, the question is not *whether* the devout soul is angry, but *why*.”<sup>14</sup> Note that Augustine asks not *at whom* one is angry, but rather *why*. The answer to the question of *why* one is angry is more complicated than simply asking whether one is angry at a person or the person’s sin. For instance, it would include examination of the perceived offense that aroused anger to determine what truly had occurred, whether it was intentional, and what response was warranted. Augustine seems to indicate here that the morality of anger is gauged not just by identifying its target (person or sin), but by a more thorough understanding of its object, which includes more than simply the target.

Augustine also seems aware of the need for more thorough attention to the object of emotions in general when he reports and adjudicates a debate between “Stoics and Peripatetics” over whether the virtuous person experiences passion. Augustine claims that the debate hinges on whether or not one thinks (as the Peripatetics do) that the passions of the wise person can be shaped by reason.<sup>15</sup> As will be seen with Thomas, the shaping of an emotion by reason is more complicated than simply identifying its target. These discussions will end up being most formative for Thomas’s own examination of the morality of anger.<sup>16</sup> But even for a great mind they are difficult to reconcile fully with the more simple person/sin distinction, as will be seen when Thomas makes just such an effort.

Before considering thinkers who follow Augustine, note should be taken of the possible positions on anger that Augustine did *not* adopt. He did not condemn anger outright as did his contemporary Jerome. He did not simply condemn deeds done out of anger, and excuse the emotional response of anger.<sup>17</sup> He did not differentiate virtuous from vicious anger by attending to different moments in the angry response, with a distinction such as

<sup>14</sup> See *De civitate dei*, CCSL 47:254: “Denique in disciplina nostra non tam quaeritur utrum pius animus irascitur, sed quare irascitur.” For the English translation, see Augustine, *City of God* 9.5 (emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> See *De civitate dei* 9.4 for Augustine’s extensive engagement with this debate. Though Augustine claims the debate is merely semantics in Book 9, he returns to this topic in Book 14.8–9 and condemns the Stoics for failing to recognize the role passions play in the virtuous life, in contradistinction to the Scriptures where it is clear that passions can be virtuous.

<sup>16</sup> For the importance of these Augustinian sources on Thomas’s doctrine on passion, see Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul* 53–58. See also Jordan, “Aquinas’ Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions.”

<sup>17</sup> This common contemporary move is never adopted in the Christian tradition, largely because of Jesus’ increasingly serious condemnations of anger in Matthew 5:22. While the most serious condemnations are directed at people whose anger is externally manifest, those who are simply angry with their brothers are also “liable to judgment.”

“propassion” vs. “passion.”<sup>18</sup> Rather, he delineated the morality of anger based on its target: anger at a person is sinful; anger at sin is virtuous. Although the target of anger is relevant to “why” one is angry, other texts in Augustine’s corpus suggest that attention to the target alone is inadequate to distinguish sinful from virtuous anger.

### THE PERSON/SIN DISTINCTION FROM AUGUSTINE TO THOMAS

What happens to the person/sin distinction in discussions of the morality of anger after Augustine? The previous section’s identification of certain problems with that distinction might suggest that this distinction would have perished quickly. But not so. The distinction lived on, and by the 13th century its use was commonplace in discussions of Matthew 5:22 and the morality of anger. In this section of my article I briefly examine the “life” of the person/sin distinction regarding anger in the Christian tradition between Augustine and Thomas. Once Augustine launched the distinction into the tradition, how was it transmitted to Thomas? Did other thinkers employ the distinction and, if so, how did they use it?

#### The *Glossa Ordinaria*: Bridge to the 13th Century

The most important link between Augustine and the theologians of the 13th century is the *glossa ordinaria*. As seen in the following subsection, several important 13th-century thinkers employ the person/sin distinction in discussing the morality of anger in the light of Matthew 5:22, and nearly all claim that the distinction is found in the *glossa*. However, the most prominent edition of the *glossa ordinaria* available today makes no mention of the distinction in the section on Matthew 5:22.<sup>19</sup>

I offer two reasons for this absence. First, the *glossa* was a living, growing body of interlinear and marginal comments on Scripture; it was widely available and highly authoritative during the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> Since the *glossa* was not a fixed work, we cannot be sure either of the precise content

<sup>18</sup> The particular distinction “passion vs. propassion” became common in the tradition after its use by Peter Lombard in his *Sentences*. Gondreau claims that Peter received the distinction from Jerome, who in turn got it from Origen (Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul* 67–68). It is based on Matthew 26:37 (where Christ “began to feel sorrow”) and is employed in discussions of passion in Christ. For instance, though Thomas refers to passion vs. propassion in Christ, he never applies this distinction to the human moral life. See, e.g., *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 15, a. 4; and Layton, “From ‘Holy Passion’ to Sinful Emotion.”

<sup>19</sup> This *glossa ordinaria* can be found in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina* (hereafter PL) 114 (Paris: Apud Garnier Fratres, 1852).

<sup>20</sup> For more on the *glossa ordinaria*, see C. O’C. Sloane, “Glosses, Biblical,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. 15 vols., 6:247–48.

of the version Thomas used or whether a published version we now have is identical to his. Moreover, the accuracy of today's published versions is questionable. They do not include material that later Scholastics repeatedly report finding in the *glossa*, and the attribution of the Migne edition to Walafrid Strabo has been shown to be false.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the person/sin distinction is, however, found in the *Commentariorum in Matthaem* by Raban Maur, the ninth-century teacher of Walafrid Strabo. Indeed, though Augustine's passage from *Retractiones* is not explicitly cited, Raban's explanation of the person/sin distinction is so close to Augustine's as to be surely dependent on it, either directly or through another commentator.<sup>22</sup> This dependence is relevant to explaining the absence of the person/sin distinction in the *glossa* attributed to Strabo, since Beryl Smalley has demonstrated that much of the *glossa* published under Strabo's name was actually the work of his teacher Raban.<sup>23</sup> Though Smalley's argument does not prove that the *glossa ordinaria* used by Thomas's predecessors and contemporaries included Raban's text on Matthew 5:22, it possibly explains why they could so consistently cite the *glossa* as their source for the distinction and yet why we today find the person/sin distinction not in the (Migne) published version of the *glossa*, but rather in a text from Raban Maur.

Regardless of our inability today to consult the *glossa ordinaria* used by 13th-century Scholastics, it is evident that they did refer to the person/sin distinction, and that they consistently reported its source as the *glossa*. This fact is important for my study for two reasons. First, it supplies a link between Augustine's articulation of the distinction and its use in the 13th century. The Scholastics who refer to it did not invent it; rather, they saw it as embedded in the tradition of commentary on Scripture. Second, though the articulation of Raban's text (if this is indeed the source for the *glossa*) clearly depends on Augustine, when this distinction reaches the 13th-century Scholastics, it is generally as a text in the *glossa* rather than as a text from Augustine.<sup>24</sup> The *glossa*, like the work of Augustine, enjoyed

<sup>21</sup> See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952) 45–65, esp. 58–59.

<sup>22</sup> See Raban Maur, *Commentariorum in Matthaem*, PL 107:806: "In quibusdam codicibus additur *sine causa*. Sed Graeci codices quibus fides adhibenda est, non habent *sine causa*, quamvis idem ipse sit sensus. Illud dicimus intuendum, quid irasci fratri. Quoniam non fratri irascitur, qui peccato fratris irascitur. Qui ergo fratri, non peccato irascitur, *sine causa* irascitur." See n. 10 above to compare this text to Augustine's from *Retractiones*.

<sup>23</sup> Smalley examines Strabo's use of Maur's commentaries on the Pentateuch and does not discuss whether or not he also relied on his teacher's work for his commentary on Matthew. See Smalley, *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* 58–59.

<sup>24</sup> See n. 46 below for an exception in Aquinas.

authority among the Scholastics. With only one exception, the person/sin distinction is always cited as originating in the *glossa* rather than in Augustine.<sup>25</sup>

### The Person/Sin Distinction among Pre-Aquinas Scholastics

Largely due to the *glossa ordinaria*, the person/sin distinction was alive and well in the 13th century. It was a standard feature of any commentary on Matthew 5:22 and concomitant discussion of the morality of anger. However, as will be evident, the 13th-century Scholastics, unlike Augustine, do not rely on this distinction as sufficient on its own to distinguish virtuous from sinful anger. First of all, they generally graft the person/sin distinction on to another common distinction in the Christian tradition on anger, namely, Gregory the Great's *ira per zelum* vs. *ira per vitium*.<sup>26</sup> Second, they refer to both of these distinctions together in the context of further argumentation on whether and when anger can be virtuous.

The importance of the person/sin distinction in Scholastic discussions of anger and Matthew 5:22 is exemplified in the two extensive treatments given to anger by one of the earlier 13th-century Parisian masters, William of Auxerre. William begins his discussion by noting that there are two types of anger: zealous anger (*ira per zelum*) and vicious anger (*ira per vitium*).<sup>27</sup> He combines this distinction from Gregory with the person/sin distinction from the *glossa*: "With zealous anger we are angered at sin, not at a person.

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly enough, the one exception is Thomas's *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, vol. 1 (Turin: Marietti, 1935) 85: Augustinus in Lib. 1 Retract. (lib. 1, cap. 19): "Illud etiam dicimus intuendum quid sit irasci fratri suo: quoniam non fratri irascitur qui peccato fratris irascitur. Qui ergo fratri, non peccato irascitur, sine causa irascitur." As I mention in n. 46 below, though Thomas employs this distinction at several key places in *De malo*, he never attributes it to Augustine except in the *Catena aurea*.

<sup>26</sup> The *ira per zelum* vs. *ira per vitium* is found in Book V, chapter 45 of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob, Libri I–X*, CCSL 143, ed. M. Adriaen (Turnholt, Belgium: Brepols, 1979) 279: "Sed inter haec solerter sciendum est quod alia est ira, quam impatientia excitat, alia quam zelus format. Illa ex uitio, haec ex uirtute generator . . . Ira quippe per uitium oculum mentis excaecat, ira autem per zelum turbat." The inspiration for the term *ira per zelum* is, of course, the story of Christ's apparent anger in the Temple (Jn 2:17), which is associated with the "zeal" mentioned in Psalm 69:10: "zeal for your house will consume me."

<sup>27</sup> See William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea* (Paris: Centre de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982). This distinction is found at *Liber 2, Tract. 22, De ira*, p. 679. Further references to this text will be given by page numbers from this edition. Note that this edition uses the spelling *ira per vicium*, but I have changed it in my article to the more common *ira per vitium* to maintain consistency with other Scholastics.

Vicious anger is the opposite.”<sup>28</sup> A few lines later, in a passage prescient of Thomas’s own discussion of anger, William distinguishes vicious anger that arises before the deliberation of reason from vicious anger that arises after this deliberation.<sup>29</sup> It is here that William first mentions Matthew 5:22, claiming it refers to the latter type of vicious anger. William refers several more times to the person/sin distinction regarding anger, though never again so closely connected with an exegesis of Matthew 5:22.<sup>30</sup> Each time the distinction is aligned with Gregory’s zealous vs. vicious anger.

William’s use of the person/sin distinction is typical of 13th-century Scholastics in several ways. First, he uses the distinction but never attributes it to Augustine. Second, he also uses Gregory’s popular “zealous vs. vicious” distinction for anger. Finally, like other Scholastics and unlike Augustine, for William this distinction does not suffice on its own to distinguish virtuous from sinful anger. Not only does William use Gregory’s distinction, but he offers a more extensive argument than Gregory does as to exactly why some anger is sinful and some is not. For instance, in ways reminiscent of Augustine’s commentary on Matthew 7:3, William affirms the compatibility of anger and charity.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle’s influence on William is also noteworthy.<sup>32</sup> With Aristotle, William claims that good anger is virtuous; he calls it “meekness” (*mansuetudo*).<sup>33</sup> As noted above, and reminiscent of Augustine’s adjudication of the Stoic/Peripatetic debate, William finds it important to determine whether or not anger has been shaped by reason. As I show below, Thomas also uses both of these arguments on the compatibility of anger and charity and anger’s ability to be regulated by reason. In conclusion, unlike Augustine and like other 13th-century Scholastics, William does not use the person/sin distinction as a self-sufficient way to both interpret Matthew 5:22 and distinguish virtuous from sinful anger.

<sup>28</sup> See *Summa aurea* 679: “Ira per zelum irascimur vitio, non personae, ira per vitium e converso.”

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, where William says, concerning anger at a person rather than sin: “Talis autem duplex est, quoniam quidam est subitus, surgens ante deliberationem rationis. Et de tali dubium est an sit peccatum. Alius est qui est ex deliberatione rationis, qui est mortale peccatum. Et de solo tali dicitur: *Omnis qui irascitur fratri suo, reus est iudicio.*”

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.* 446, e.g.: “ira per zelum irascitur vitiis, ira vitium naturae.”

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.* 679: “Ira per zelum dicitur habitus quo aliquis est habilis sive promptus ad irascendum peccato proximi <ex> zelo, id est ex caritate.”

<sup>32</sup> For more on William as one of the earliest Christians to appropriate Aristotle, see Brother Azarias, “Aristotle and the Christian Church: An Essay” (New York: Sadlier, 1888), available at: <http://www2.nd.edu/Departments//Maritain/etext/aatcc.htm> (accessed August 10, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> See *Summa aurea* 445: “item ire per zelum est irasci prout oportet, mansuetudinis vero est non irasci prout oportet.”

Like William, Bonaventure also uses the person/sin distinction repeatedly in his own discussions of anger without relying on it to do the main distinguishing work. In a sermon on Matthew 5:22, Bonaventure quotes the *glossa* as saying that “anger is with cause, and not an illicit *commotio* but rather a judgment, when one is not angry with one’s brother but at sin.”<sup>34</sup> This argument appears rather late in Bonaventure’s treatment of Matthew 5:22. It is also mentioned just once, and solely as a quote from the *glossa*. Yet, lest one think that the lack of prominent position and use of this distinction in Bonaventure’s sermon indicate that he cites it simply in deference to the authority of the *glossa*, it must be noted that the distinction is also found in other works of Bonaventure without reference to the *glossa*.<sup>35</sup> Clearly Bonaventure understood the distinction as both prominent in the tradition and useful in discussions of anger.

Despite Bonaventure’s affirmation of its value, his use of the person/sin distinction betrays a suspicion toward anger that is noticeably absent in William. Bonaventure does not unequivocally reject the possibility of virtuous anger, as does Jerome; Bonaventure’s use of the distinction should make that obvious. Furthermore, both Bonaventure and his teacher Alexander of Hales give unprecedented attention to the question of the presence of anger in Jesus. In fact, Bonaventure conspicuously departs from his teacher in claiming that anger was indeed present in Jesus.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, Bonaventure’s claim that virtuous anger is a “judgment” suggests the sort of anger Bonaventure condones.

In a manner reminiscent of Augustine, Bonaventure correlates anger “with cause” with anger at sin. Anger at a person is anger without cause.

<sup>34</sup> See Bonaventure, *Sermones de tempore (Dominica quinta post pentacosten)*, *Opera omnia*, 11 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1901) 9:376: “ira est ex causa, non est commotio illicita, sed iudicium, eo quod non irascitur fratri suo, sed vitio.” The term *commotio* is left untranslated here since its English cognate “commotion” has a negative connotation not necessarily implied by the Latin term. Better, though still not fully adequate, English translations would be “agitation” or “tumult.”

<sup>35</sup> See Bonaventure, *Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastae*, *Opera omnia* 6:56: “dicendum, quod est irasci vitio et irasci naturae; primum est virtutis et bonum, secundum vitii et malum.” Though the editor of this text refers to Augustine’s *Retractiones* here, Bonaventure makes no such reference in the text itself. Indeed, his reference to the *glossa* rather than to Augustine in the citation noted above reveals his understanding of the source of this distinction. See also Bonaventure’s *Sermones de diversis (De modo vivendi)*, *Opera omnia* 9 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1901) 725: “Vitari debet etiam affectus iracundiae, ne spiritus turbetur contra aliquem, et si oportet moveri, sic feratur in vitium, ut non moveatur animus in personam.”

<sup>36</sup> For more on Alexander and Bonaventure on anger in Christ, see Gondreau, *Passions of Christ’s Soul* 97, 427–28.

Yet Bonaventure also here distinguishes anger as “judgment” from anger as “illicit *commotio*.” He aligns the former with (permissible) anger at sin, and the latter with (sinful) anger at one’s brother. Anger as “illicit *commotio*” is sinful by definition. Bonaventure is not clear as to whether anger is illicit *qua commotio*, or whether sinful anger is simply a *commotio* that is against the person and therefore vicious anger. In other words, Bonaventure is not precise about what exactly renders anger sinful. Anger’s sinfulness could derive from its being a *commotio* (a corporeal movement that agitates the body), or simply from the fact that anger’s target is a person (rather than sin). Though Bonaventure’s use of the person/sin distinction would suggest the latter, by aligning anger at a person with anger as “illicit *commotio*,” and by opposing anger at a person to anger at sin as “anger as judgment,” Bonaventure at least implicitly suggests that anger’s status as a *commotio* necessarily renders it sinful. The anger that was found in Jesus and that marks the virtuous life is thus never a *commotio*, but always a “judgment.”

A larger question is raised here than simply the possibility of Christian anger. That question is whether any emotion such as anger can participate in reason in such a way as to become virtuous and still remain an emotion (or *passio*) properly so-called (with the *commotio* constitutive of a *passio*), or whether justified anger is virtuous only because it is no longer properly an emotion (with the concomitant *commotio*) but rather a nonagitative judgment. In the 13th century this debate was about whether or not the emotions (or “sensitive appetite”) could be seats, or subjects, of virtue. Bonaventure said no; Aquinas said yes. As will be seen below, Thomas, like William, describes a virtuous anger shaped by reason that is still properly a *passio* with the concomitant bodily *commotio*. It seems Bonaventure could not agree with this claim. Arbitrating this entire debate is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>37</sup> The different kinds of anger justified by Bonaventure on the one hand and William and Thomas on the other are noted here to reaffirm the limitations of the person/sin distinction. This distinction can be employed successfully by people who have rather different understandings of the nature of anger that may be called virtuous. Bonaventure’s use of the distinction in a way that contrasts with Thomas’s reveals that the distinction on its own is inadequate to distinguish virtuous anger.

The final pre-Thomas 13th-century Scholastic examined here who employs the person/sin distinction is Thomas’s teacher Albert the Great.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the Scholastic debate over the passions’ ability to be “seats” of virtue, see Marie-Dominique Chenu, “Les passions vertueuses: L’anthropologie de Saint Thomas,” *Révue philosophique de Louvain* 72 (1974) 11–18, and Chenu, “Body and Body Politic in the Creation Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas,” *Listening* 13 (1978) 214–32.

Thomas uses this distinction to further his argument in his *Summa theologiae* and his *Super Matthaeum*. What he writes about the distinction in the *Summa* is brief and subsumed in the *Super Matthaeum*, so I need examine only the latter text here.<sup>38</sup>

Albert's use of the person/sin distinction regarding anger is similar to Bonaventure's. Albert does not give it prominence, but, like Bonaventure, he repeats it and clearly defines its content. He explicitly equates anger at sin to zealous anger with cause, and anger at a person to vicious anger without cause.<sup>39</sup> Like Bonaventure, Albert at times uses different terms for the person/sin distinction. He speaks of *irascitur naturae, non vitio*. Lest one think that Albert's use of *naturae* suggests a different distinction due to the absence of the word "*fratri*" or "*personae*," it must be noted that Albert equates *naturae* to *fratri* in this same text.<sup>40</sup>

Albert's treatment of anger is noteworthy for another reason, one that differentiates his treatment from Bonaventure's. Albert uses *conturbatio* and *commotio* to describe zealous anger. As noted above, Bonaventure conspicuously calls zealous anger a "judgment," and claims that it is not a *commotio illicita*. Again, it is unclear whether or not, for Bonaventure, it is the *commotio* that makes anger *illicita*. His equation of anger at sin to anger as judgment suggests this is precisely what Bonaventure rejects. Albert's characterization of zealous anger as a *conturbatio* or *commotio* even more clearly reveals that such bodily agitations can be zealous. Either way, it is clear that the person/sin distinction can be employed by thinkers with different—indeed, in this case, seemingly conflicting—understandings of the nature of zealous anger.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The relevant text in Albert's *Summa theologiae* reads: "non omnis ira malum est, neque peccatum: quia duplex est ira secundum quod a Gregorio distinguitur et ab Isidoro, scilicet ira per zelum, quae bona est et virtus, scilicet quando homo irascitur vitio, et non naturae. Et est ira per vitium, quae est mala, quando scilicet irascitur naturae et non vitio" (*Opera omnia ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum edenda*, vol. 34 of 37, ed. D. Siedler [Münster: Aschendorff, 1978] 376).

<sup>39</sup> See Albert's *Super Matthaeum*, *Opera omnia*, vol. 21, pt. 1, ed. Bernhard Schmidt (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987) 133: "Ira per zelum est conturbatio et commotio anima contra vitium. . . . Ira autem per vitium commotio est animi qua quis molitur nocumentum fratri non propter vitium, quod est in eo. Et ideo talis irascitur naturae, non vitio. . . . Sic igitur, qui nullam causam irae habet, irascitur fratri."

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*: "Ira autem per vitium commotio est animi qua quis molitur nocumentum fratri non propter vitium, quod est in eo. Et ideo talis irascitur naturae, non vitio." Bonaventure used similar terminology in his sermon on Ecclesiastes (see n. 35 above).

<sup>41</sup> Bonaventure's condoning of anger, understood as judgment rather than as passion, echoes the views of his teacher Alexander of Hales. The person/sin distinction is found in Alexander's works, though not directly connected with Matthew 5:22. Like his contemporaries, he associates *ira per zelum* with anger at sin rather

These passages from 13th-century Scholastic theologians prompt several conclusions concerning the use of the person/sin distinction to interpret Matthew 5:22 and address the morality of anger. First, the distinction is clearly and frequently in use. Second, it is now generally attributed to the *glossa* rather than to Augustine. Third, it is commonly associated with Gregory's *ira per zelum* vs. *ira per vitium* distinction. Finally, though cited prominently, the distinction is not seen by these theologians as sufficient on its own to distinguish virtuous from sinful anger. In fact, as I indicated above, the distinction was used by thinkers with quite different understandings of the nature of virtuous anger. The stage is now set to examine St. Thomas's work on anger, which not only is more thorough than any of those discussed so far, but also shows signs of clear development precisely as to his use of the person/sin distinction.

### THOMAS'S USE OF THE PERSON/SIN DISTINCTION TO INTERPRET MATTHEW 5:22 AND DEFINE VIRTUOUS ANGER

What role, if any, does Augustine's person/sin distinction play in the work of Thomas Aquinas on anger? How does this distinction fit with any other arguments on anger? And what might the answers to these questions tell us about anger and the moral life? The scope of Thomas's discussion of anger is unprecedented in the Christian tradition. In addition to a host of other brief references, Thomas extensively examines the morality of anger in five different texts: *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, *Lectura super Matthaicum*, *Collationes in decem preceptis*, *Summa theologiae*, and *Sententia libri ethicorum*.<sup>42</sup> Four of these texts warrant close attention.

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than at a person (which is *ira per vitium*). In his *Summa theologica* (vol. 3 [Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1930] 549), where he discusses anger, Alexander uses the person/sin distinction while describing how *ira per zelum* is contrary to the sin of anger. He claims: "Ira per zelum opponitur ei [irae] ratione materiae, hoc est ratione eius de quo est, quia convenient in genere actus sed opponuntur quantum ad illud de quo, quia qui irascitur per vitium, irascitur personae, qui autem irascitur per zelum, irascitur peccato, quia ira per zelum vult destruere vitium in se et in alio. Unde ira per zelum vitium respicit, et sic est respectu mali; sed ira per vitium respicit personam, persona autem, in quantum huiusmodi, bonum est."

<sup>42</sup> See *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (hereafter *De malo*), *Opera omnia*, vol. 23 (Rome: Leonine, 1982) q. 12; J-P. Renard, "La lectura super Matthaicum V:20-48 de Thomas d'Aquin," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 50 (1983) 145-90 [hereafter *Lectura*, with page references to this edition]; Torrell, "Les *Collationes in decem preceptis* de Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Edition critique avec introduction et notes," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 69 (1985) 5-40, 227-63; *Summa theologiae*, *Opera omnia*, vols. 4-12 (Rome: Leonine, 1888-1906) (hereafter *ST*). While fascinating in several ways for its treatment of anger, the *Sententia libri ethicorum* is not examined here since it does not treat Matthew 5:22.

### Thomas's Early Use of the Person/Sin Distinction

The first text to be considered is Thomas's *De malo*. Augustine's person/sin distinction features prominently in question 12, article 1, "Whether All Anger Is Evil, or Is Some Anger Good?"<sup>43</sup> The very first objection offered is Jerome's interpretation of Matthew 5:22, to the effect that all anger is a sin since the phrase "without cause" is inauthentic. In responding to this objection, Thomas adopts *in toto* Augustine's person/sin distinction, saying that "Jerome is speaking of that anger by which one is angry against one's brother, . . . but anger which is against sin is good."<sup>44</sup> Thomas also refers to the distinction in response to a later objector who claims vengeance is God's alone. Thomas claims that one who is angry at one's brother's sin (rather than at one's brother) is seeking God's vengeance, not one's own.<sup>45</sup> Finally, the distinction helps structure Thomas's *respondeo*, emphasizing its importance for him in this article. As was the case with his fellow 13th-century Scholastics, the distinction is not directly attributed to Augustine.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless it features prominently—even more prominently than in his contemporaries' work—in Thomas's argument in *De malo* on anger and Matthew 5:22. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more central role for this distinction than that in *De malo* q. 12. a.1, given its use to structure the *respondeo* and reply to two objections.

Yet, like his Scholastic peers, Thomas is not content to let the distinction suffice on its own to distinguish virtuous from vicious anger. He augments the distinction with further argument. A closer look at the *respondeo*, however, reveals both Thomas's effort to further augment the person/sin distinction and the difficulties he encounters in doing so:

For clearly when a person seeks *vindicatio* in conformity with the proper order of justice, this is virtuous, for example when he seeks the correction of sin without violation of the order of law, *and this is to be angry against sin*; on the other hand when a person inordinately seeks *vindicatio* it is a sin, either because he seeks *vindicatio* contrary to the order of the law or because he seeks *vindicatio* with the

<sup>43</sup> See also Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. John A. Oesterle and Jean T. Oesterle (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1995). The question referenced here is 12, ad 1.

<sup>44</sup> *De malo* 12, a. 1, ad 1. We know from the *Catena aurea* that Thomas was aware of both Jerome's and Augustine's interpretations of Matthew 5:22. However, there we also find an inaccurate reference to Augustine's *De civitate dei* 14.9. Though the quotation attributed to Augustine applies only to passion in general, not to anger, Augustine does make such a claim concerning anger at 9.5.

<sup>45</sup> See *De malo* 12, a. 1, 14: "Ad quartum decimum dicendum quod ille qui irascitur de peccato fratri sui non querit uindictam sui sed uindictam Dei."

<sup>46</sup> As noted above (n. 25), Thomas does attribute this distinction to Augustine in the *Catena aurea*, but that attribution is not repeated in other works.

intention of banishing the sinner rather than abolishing the sin, *and this is to be angry against a brother*.<sup>47</sup>

Thomas's main argument here is that anger as a desire for *vindicatio* can be reasonable, and when it is, it is virtuous. This is why he opens the *respondeo* with a reference to the classic Stoic/Peripatetic debate he received from Augustine's *De civitate dei*. He even defines when the object of anger is reasonable, and provides some clues as to ways it can be unreasonable. In classic Thomistic concern to synthesize authoritative sources, Thomas tries to graft Augustine's person/sin distinction on to the reasonable/unreasonable distinction. But the attempt is awkward. In the first half of the quotation, anger against sin *is* reasonable anger, and not a supplemental condition to it. In the second half, anger against the person is one of the ways anger can be inordinate, along with its being beyond the order of law.

The cumbersome use of the person/sin distinction in *De malo* indicates two problems with that distinction. First, as suggested in the work of other 13th-century Scholastics, the distinction is not adequate on its own. As Thomas's quotation indicates, anger against sin does not justify all anger; after all, it may still be excessive, or contrary to law. Conversely, anger against the brother (in the sense of banishing the sinner rather than abolishing the sin) is only one way anger can be vicious. Second, just three articles later Thomas relies heavily on Aristotle's *Ethics* to argue that anger is different from hatred.<sup>48</sup> "Anger is always against individual persons, since it is caused by injurious acts, and acts are attributable to individuals. But hatred can be against some general thing," such as sin.<sup>49</sup> The claim that anger can only be against individual persons is clearly incompatible with Augustine's person/sin distinction, despite Thomas's reliance on that very distinction just three articles earlier. This tension signals the beginning of the end of Thomas's use of the person/sin distinction.

### The Rejection of the Person/Sin Distinction in Thomas's Work

Turning to Thomas's other treatments of Matthew 5:22 and the morality of anger should reveal whether these inconsistencies in *De malo* are rectified. Perhaps the best place to examine Thomas's interpretation of

<sup>47</sup> *De malo* 12, a. 1, resp. (Aquinas, *On Evil* 374, emphasis added). The term *vindicatam* is purposely left untranslated here (as *vindicatio*). Common translations such as "vengeance," "revenge," or "vindication" have negative connotations. That was not the case in Latin, where the term has a neutral sense of "righting an injustice" (which could be done virtuously or sinfully). In fact, Thomas treats *vindicatio* as a virtue in his treatise on justice. See *ST* 2-2, q. 108.

<sup>48</sup> As noted above, this is also an Augustinian point. See *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* 2.19.

<sup>49</sup> *De malo* 12, a. 4, ad 3 (Aquinas, *On Evil* 388).

Matthew 5:22 is his *Lectura super Mattheum* (his *Collationes in decem praeceptis* uses the same Matthean text).<sup>50</sup> Both the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments offer occasions to examine anger due to Jesus' connecting anger to murder in Matthew 5:21. Thus Thomas's analysis begins with an examination of when it may and may not be permissible to kill—an important point for my discussion below of Thomas's treatment of the literal sense of Jesus' words on anger. Thomas also explicitly mentions the inauthenticity of early texts that included "without cause," revealing that he is aware of the issue that prompted the different interpretations of Augustine and Jerome. Surprisingly, given the connection to murder and absence of "without cause" in the original text, Thomas still asks "whether all anger is contrary to virtue," and replies negatively.<sup>51</sup>

More interesting for this article than *whether* Thomas affirms the possibility of virtuous anger is *how* he distinguishes anger that is virtuous. As a scriptural commentary, the *Lectura* could have given Thomas the perfect opportunity to justify some anger, as Augustine did, so long as it is not "against one's brother," and to ground that position in the words of Jesus himself. Yet the person/sin distinction on anger appears nowhere in Thomas's text. Instead, he claims we know anger can be virtuous, first on the basis of authority, since the Gospels tell us Jesus was angry.<sup>52</sup> Second, we know by reason that anger can be virtuous, since if there were no virtuous anger, there would be a human capacity (e.g., the irascible appetite) that would have no fitting act and thus would be given to humanity for no purpose.<sup>53</sup>

Thomas goes on to say that, while anger can defy one's reason, it is not necessarily contrary to reason. Referring to the Stoic/Peripatetic debate

<sup>50</sup> The best critical editions of these texts now available are in the articles by Renard and Torrell cited above (n. 42). More attention to the dates of composition of these texts is found below. But according to Torrell (18), the *Collationes* was edited late in Thomas's life, and whole sections of the *Lectura* were imported into the edited version. This explains why the critical editions of the relevant sections of both texts read exactly the same. Hence I treat the two texts together.

<sup>51</sup> See *Lectura* 158: "Sed nunquid omnis ira contrariatur uirtuti? . . . Et ideo dicendum quod ira aliquando est uirtus, aliquando non."

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*: "Quod patet et auctoritate: quia in ewangeliis inuenimus istas passionem quodam modo Christo attributas, in quo fuit plenitudo sapientie." Augustine also mentions anger in Christ. See Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul* 56. But Augustine never uses the presence of anger in Christ to justify some anger or interpret the person/sin distinction in Matthew 5:22.

<sup>53</sup> See *Lectura* 158: "Et ratione: quia [si] omnes passionem contrariarentur uirtuti, essent alicue [potentie anime] que deseruient in nocumentum quia non haberent aliquos actus conuenientes, et tunc irascibilis et concupiscibilis frustra date fuissent homini."

over the possibility of passions being shaped by reason,<sup>54</sup> he advances that debate by explicating three levels of the passion anger. In each case there is a desire for *vindicatio*, which is the essence of anger. The first level is not truly a passion, but rather a judgment of reason, since it is not in the sensitive appetite. The second level of anger is truly a passion since there is *commotio* in the soul. Yet that *commotio* does not defy reason, and so passions at this level are shaped by reason and found in the virtuous. At the third level, anger is a passion with *commotio* in the soul, but that *commotio* defies reason and is thus contrary to virtue. It can be either mortally or venially sinful. Though anger of the first level can clearly be virtuous, Thomas also claims that anger on the second level is part of the virtuous Christian life.

This discussion of anger and reason points us toward the *Summa theologiae*. But before proceeding to that text, I should add two more notes concerning Thomas's *Lectura*. First, early in the relevant section of the *Lectura*, Thomas observes that anger is to be distinguished from hatred, again indicating the importance of this distinction for a firm grasp of the morality of anger.<sup>55</sup> Thomas elaborates this difference more fully in the *Summa theologiae*. There he claims that anger seeks harm (an evil) to another under the aspect of good (*vindicatio*), whereas hatred seeks harm to another simply, as something disagreeable to him.<sup>56</sup> Yet even in the *Lectura* (and, as seen above, in *De malo*) he affirms, even without fully explaining, the difference between anger and hatred.<sup>57</sup> If anger is justified by naming its object as sin rather than the person, it becomes indistinguishable from hatred. The point for my purposes is this: relying on the person/sin distinction to discern virtuous anger obfuscates any adequate distinction between anger and hatred.

Second, in his *Lectura* Thomas briefly examines the Galatians passage discussed by Augustine in *De sermone*. In that early text, Augustine justi-

<sup>54</sup> Thomas received this debate from Augustine's *De civitate dei*. See *Catena aurea* 85. For the impact of Augustine's thought on Thomas's mature work on the passions, see Jordan, "Aquinas' Construction of a Moral Account of the Passions."

<sup>55</sup> See *Lectura* 157: "Est ergo differentia, quia ira non appetit malum proximo nisi in quantum vult vindictam; unde, facta vindicta quiescit; in odio, autem ipsum nocumentum est per se uolitur et nunquam quiescit appetitus; ergo grauior est motus odii quam ire."

<sup>56</sup> See *ST* 1–2, q. 46, a. 2; q. 46, a. 6. Note that in the former passage, reminiscent of *De malo* 12, a. 4, Thomas explicitly says that anger tends toward the person with whom one is angry.

<sup>57</sup> Lest one think that such a distinction arose simply from the influence of Aristotle's illuminating an otherwise muddled tradition, recall that Augustine himself, in *De sermone*, affirmed the distinction between anger and hatred while exegeting Matthew 7:3.

fied Paul's calling the Galatians "fools" by the fact that the anger was not "without cause." Given the obvious fact that Paul is addressing the Galatians themselves and not their sins, Augustine's person/sin distinction seems to leave Paul condemned by Christ's words in Matthew 5:22. Oddly, Thomas does not justify Paul's words to the Galatians by claiming that Paul's anger was reasonable and thus virtuous. Rather, he claims Paul's words were not formulated out of anger, but necessitated by justice (according to which even the use of the whip can be necessary!).<sup>58</sup> To recall the three levels of anger mentioned above, Thomas basically places Paul's anger at the first, rather than second, level. Why Thomas would not use his own consistent argument (that anger can be both a passion and virtuous, if it is reasonable) to apply to Paul's anger is unclear. In no other text does Thomas exonerate an angry person by claiming he or she was not really angry.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, despite the lack of consistency between Thomas's defense of Paul and the bulk of his own discussion of anger in his *Lectura* and other texts, Thomas's need to revisit the Galatians passage suggests another reason why Augustine's person/sin distinction is problematic.<sup>60</sup>

The final text to consider in detail is the *Summa theologiae*, where Thomas's main strategy in examining anger is to explain in more detail how anger can be reasonable.<sup>61</sup> In nearly every article in *Secunda secundae* q. 158 on anger considered as a sin or as virtuous, Thomas claims anger can be reasonable (or unreasonable, for that matter) in object and/or mode. A detailed analysis of these claims is beyond the scope of this article;<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See *Lectura* 161: "Dicendum quod [Paulus] non dicebat ex ira, sed ex necessitate iustitiae, quia secundum hocetiam flagellum non est peccatum."

<sup>59</sup> Nor does Thomas justify anger in Christ by saying it was not truly anger. See *ST* 3, q. 15, a. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas's position on Paul's anger is not incompatible with his broader thought on anger, though Thomas could have placed Paul's anger toward the Galatians at the second level and guarded its sinlessness even while reaffirming the possibility of virtuous anger that is truly a passion (which is clearly the point of this passage as a whole). Had Thomas described Paul's anger as an example of the second level, it would have afforded him the opportunity to offer another example of how not only Augustine and Aristotle but also the Scriptures themselves justify the passion anger when it is reasonable.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas also claims that anger is a created natural potency and must therefore have a fitting act (*ST* 2–2, q. 158, a. 8). He also claims that anger is in Christ (see *ST* 3, q. 15, a. 9; note that he does not use the person/sin distinction here). Yet this claim comes well after his discussions of anger, the morality of emotion, and the capital vice of anger. Unlike in the *Lectura*, Thomas does not use the presence of anger in Christ to draw conclusions for the broader question of the morality of anger. By far the bulk of his argument on the morality of anger in the *Summa theologiae* concerns the possibility of reasonable anger.

<sup>62</sup> For more on anger that is virtuous in object and mode, see Diana Fritz Cates, "Taking Women's Experience Seriously: Thomas Aquinas and Audre Lourde on

it suffices here to say that anger is reasonable in object—reminiscent of Augustine's *De civitate dei* and even portions of Thomas's *De malo*—when it is directed at the right person (in response to a genuine offense), for the right goal, and toward proper *vindicatio*.<sup>63</sup> Though this attention to object includes consideration of the “target” of anger, it includes more than that, and even attention to target does not break down simply into: anger at person = virtuous, or anger at sin = vicious. Though Augustine's person/sin distinction is related to the discussion of the object of anger, that distinction is not only inadequate in comparison to Thomas's more detailed examination of anger as reasonable or unreasonable in object and/or mode, but it is also erroneous, given Thomas's claim that anger is reasonable when, among other things, it is aimed at the right person.<sup>64</sup>

Thomas has ample opportunity to employ the person/sin distinction in the *Summa theologiae*. The Matthew 5:22 text, and its interpretation by Jerome as prohibiting all anger, appears as prominently in the *Summa* as it does in *De malo*, namely, in the very first objection of the first article of *Secunda secundae*, q. 158. As in *De malo*, Thomas relies on the Stoic/Peripatetic debate to assert the possibility of reasonable anger, and claims that the Lord is only condemning anger that is not reasonable.<sup>65</sup> Yet, though the structure of *Secunda secundae*, q. 158, a.1 and the corresponding *De malo*, q.12. a. 1 are exactly the same (including the prominent role of Matthew 5:22), nowhere in the *Summa* does Thomas mention the person/sin distinction as it concerns anger.<sup>66</sup>

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Anger,” in *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak (Washington: Georgetown University, 1996) 47–88. See also William C. Mattison III, “Virtuous Anger? From Questions of *Vindicatio* to the Habituation of Emotion,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24 (2004) 159–79.

<sup>63</sup> See *ST* 2–2, q. 158, a. 2–4.

<sup>64</sup> In addition to the claim noted above (n. 49) about anger as directed at persons (*De malo* 12, a. 4), and the claim about the object of anger being the correct person (*ST* 2–2, q. 158, a. 2), see also *ST* 1–2, q. 46, a. 7 where Thomas follows Aristotle in claiming that we can be angry only with those “individuals” with whom we are in a relationship of justice.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas even claims Jerome is saying as much, though this is clearly *not* Jerome's claim. Here we see another attempt by Thomas to synthesize traditions. For more subversion of Jerome, see *ST* 2–2, q. 158, a. 3, ad 3 on charity.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas does continue to use this distinction with regard to hatred, indicating that he does not reject the distinction *per se*, but rather its use regarding anger. See *ST* 2–2, q. 34, a. 3 on hatred as a sin opposed to charity. His use of the person/sin distinction with regard to hatred even after his rejection of it regarding anger provides yet another reason why it is so important to clearly distinguish anger and hatred.

### Lessons from Thomas's Rejection of the Person/Sin Distinction, and How to Interpret Matthew 5:22

Two main lessons can be gleaned from this examination of the person/sin distinction in Thomas's *corpus*. The first concerns the explanatory adequacy of the distinction; the second concerns its ramifications on attempts to distinguish anger and hatred. After summarizing these conclusions, I will attend to how Thomas understands the literal sense of Matthew 5:22, given that he eschews both Jerome's unequivocal condemnation of anger and Augustine's exoneration, based on Jesus' words in Scripture.

First, Thomas's attempt in *De malo* to graft Augustine's person/sin distinction on to his own reasonable/unreasonable distinction affirms Augustine's insight that the morality of anger does rest upon its object, or as Augustine himself had put it: *why* someone is angry. However, the clumsiness of Thomas's attempts to merge those two distinctions, and especially his eventual decision to abandon Augustine's distinction altogether, reveal that the person/sin distinction is inadequate to distinguish virtuous from vicious anger. Augustine's person/sin distinction comes closest to revealing whether anger aims at reforming or banishing the sinner (though even this is not exactly what Augustine's distinction says). But there are other ways anger can be vicious in object. For example, one can become angry at a sin (rather than at a person) but nonetheless desire excessive retribution, rendering the anger vicious in object. Furthermore, Augustine does not at all attend to anger that is vicious in mode, as when one desires reasonable *vindicatio* but in a manner that is excessive or lacking in "mode" (perhaps best understood as intensity). Augustine's distinction is inadequate on its own to differentiate among these more subtle cases of vicious anger.

Second, the repeated references to the distinction between anger and hatred in Thomas's texts on anger (and even Augustine's own comments on Matthew 7:3) reveal how similar, and yet very different, these two passions are. While hatred seeks simply harm of the other, anger seeks harm but under the aspect of good, i.e., *vindicatio*. In addition, while hatred can be directed toward inanimate objects or classes of persons, anger is only properly directed toward individuals with whom one is in a relationship of justice. Therefore, for Thomas, anger must be directed at a person (rather than at sin) and can still be virtuous and distinct from hatred. Augustine's person/sin distinction is thus not only inadequate on its own, but actually eliminates any real distinction between anger and hatred by lauding anger directed toward something other than a person.

Finally, given that Thomas adopts neither Augustine's nor Jerome's interpretations of Matthew 5:22, how does Thomas respect the literal sense of Scripture, given Jesus' seemingly clear words condemning anger? While Thomas is clear in his commitment to the primacy of the literal sense of

Scripture, the literal sense of a passage can be ascertained with references to other Scriptural passages.<sup>67</sup> So he appeals to the literal sense of other passages to determine whether Jesus is indeed prohibiting all anger, and concludes he is not. First, the Gospels tell us plainly that Jesus was angry.<sup>68</sup> Given that it is Jesus who prohibits anger in Matthew 5:22 and is without sin, it seems clear that Jesus is speaking not of all anger but only of certain anger. Second, the condemnation of anger in Matthew 5:22 is tied to the divine command not to kill. Thomas notes that this command clearly does not refer to all killing.<sup>69</sup> One example he offers is the execution of criminals following a court trial. Hence, since the very commandment of which Jesus seeks the fulfillment in the condemnation of anger is itself qualified, it should not surprise us that Jesus' words on anger similarly do not refer to all instances of anger. Indeed, in the crucial *Summa theologiae* text on anger, Thomas makes most constructive use of Matthew 5:22 to claim that Jesus is referring here to anger of the type that prompts one toward the killing forbidden in the Mosaic Law, rather than anger *per se*.<sup>70</sup>

### CONCLUSION

There is a rather dramatic shift across Thomas's *corpus* concerning how he interprets Matthew 5:22 when examining the possibility of virtuous anger. Though he consistently affirms throughout his work that anger may indeed be virtuous, in *De malo* he relies prominently on the person/sin distinction to interpret Matthew 5:22, while this distinction is nowhere to be found in three other important works on this topic. I offer here no conclusive explanation for this discrepancy, though the most obvious explanation would be a dating of the twelfth question of *De malo* as earlier than Thomas's other three extended treatments of anger.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> See *ST* 1, q. 1, a. 10, esp. ad 1.

<sup>68</sup> Recall *Lectura* 158. The scripture text on Christ's anger that immediately comes to mind is John 2:17. This is the source of the common phrase in the tradition for good anger, "zealous anger." However, the actual term "anger" never appears in either John 2:17 or Thomas's commentary on it. Nonetheless anger is explicitly ascribed to Christ in the Vulgate edition of Mark 3:5 (*cum ira*), noted by Thomas in his *Catena aurea* 492. For an extensive list of Gospel references to anger in Christ, see Gondreau, *Passions of Christ's Soul* 37 n. 7.

<sup>69</sup> See *Lectura* 156–57.

<sup>70</sup> See *ST* 2–2, q. 158, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>71</sup> One possible explanation for Thomas's prominent use of Augustine's person/sin distinction in *De malo* and yet its complete absence in his other works on the same topic is the expansive nature of the *quaestio disputata* genre. Objections and replies far outnumber those found in the *Summa theologiae*. Yet, as noted above, Augustine's person/sin distinction does not merely appear in one objection or response of *De malo*. It is used to refute the powerful first objection from the

The purpose of this article has been to explain the origins and use of the person/sin distinction ultimately rejected by Thomas, and to use that survey

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authoritative Jerome, an objection that appears first also in the more truncated list of objections to the very same question in *ST* 2–2. q. 158, a. 1. The distinction also appears in another response in *De malo*, and actually helps structure the *respondeo*. This prominence suggests that its presence in *De malo* is not adequately explained by the opportunity for expanded argument afforded by the genre of the *quaestio disputata*.

Another possible explanation for the prominence of the person/sin distinction in *De malo* and yet its complete absence from the other works is an earlier date of composition for *De malo* 12. How does its dating compare with that of other texts in which Thomas examines anger and Matthew 5:22? Recent scholarship places the composition of the *Secunda pars* of the *Summa* in 1271 and into 1272. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1996) 333; James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1974) 361. Torrell (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* 339) dates the *Lectura* with “high probability” to 1269–1270. Though Weisheipl (*Friar Thomas D'Aquino* 371–72) claims it was “more likely” completed in the first Parisian stay, he acknowledges it could have been composed in either one. The texts I have examined would indicate the later date of composition, since a composition date prior to *De malo* would necessitate a more difficult explanation of why Thomas completely neglected a central argument on anger in an early work, then adopted the argument in a later work, and once again completely omitted it in the later *Summa theologiae*. The *Collationes* was likely organized late in Thomas’s life, with whole sections of the *Lectura* (including the material examined here on Matthew 5:22) adopted in that editing process. (See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 357 and Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino* 402–3.)

What of the *De malo*? Estimates vary for the dating of this work. Torrell (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* 336) claims the section including the question on anger would have been published in 1270, and disputed shortly before that. Weisheipl (*Friar Thomas D'Aquino* 363–64) offers a wider range of possible dates of composition: 1266 to 1272. He ultimately concludes that the text was completed by 1266–1267 in Rome. He notes that Odon Lottin, who argues for a Parisian disputation, also grants that this text was completed before the *Prima secundae*. Weisheipl’s earlier date of composition (1266–1267) would explain how the text could be significantly different from the three other texts Thomas wrote on the same topic.

Adjudicating debates over the dating of Thomas’s works between the likes of Weisheipl and Torrell is far beyond the expertise of this author. Nevertheless, the significant difference in how Thomas argues for the possibility of virtuous anger—that is, by using Augustine’s person/sin distinction in *De malo* and conspicuously omitting it in other works—may contribute to those debates. The research presented here appears to offer evidence on an earlier dating of *De malo*. For another example of recent scholarship that has possible ramifications for the dating of (at least parts of) *De malo*, see Kevin Flannery, S.J., *Acts Amid Precepts* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2001) 247–49. See also the response of Michael Sherwin, O.P., in his *By Knowledge and by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2005) 26 n. 36. This debate over the dating of *De malo*, however, does not address anger or the person/sin distinction.

as an occasion to illuminate certain specific facets of the broader question of the morality of anger. What does this historical survey contribute to research into the possibility of virtuous anger?

First, if anger can indeed be virtuous for a Christian, then determining whether or not it is depends on a careful examination of the object of anger. The importance of the object is seen in Augustine's own work where he claims Christians ask not *whether* one is angry but *why*. It is seen in Scholastics such as William of Auxerre, who asks whether or not anger has been shaped by the deliberation of reason. It is most fully elaborated in Thomas's work where he claims that anger may be reasonable or unreasonable in object and/or mode. For these scholars, reasonable anger is (1) prompted by an occasion of genuine injustice, (2) directed at the perpetrator of injustice, and (3) directed at fair *vindictio* with the further goal of restoring justice, including reconciliation with, rather than banishment of, the offender. Such anger is compatible with charity, since the "harm" it seeks for *vindictio* is actually constitutive of the reestablishment of right relationship. This is what distinguishes anger from hatred, which seeks harm simply for itself. Augustine's distinction is one way of specifying the object but offers far too little detail to determine the reasonableness of anger. Furthermore, in mistakenly absolving "anger at sin" he obfuscates any real distinction between anger and hatred, and precludes the possibility of anger being compatible with charity when directed toward the offender but with the ultimate goal of reconciliation. None of this important discussion about anger is raised when asking simplistically whether one's anger is at another's sin or at another person.

Second, the use of the person/sin distinction is adopted by thinkers with very different views on whether or not a passion such as anger can be virtuous *qua passio*. Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales label anger at a person a blameworthy *commotio*, while anger at sin is a judgment. Labeling only anger at sin a judgment conflates the target of anger (person or sin) with the type of human response made toward that target. As noted earlier, it is not clear from Bonaventure's claim whether what makes anger sinful is that it is at another person or that it is a *commotio*; the two motives are conflated. Other thinkers such as Thomas (and Albert and William) claim that *passiones qua commotiones* can be virtuous or sinful based not on *whether* they have been influenced by the deliberation of reason (since only that influence renders them morally blameworthy or praiseworthy in the first place), but on *how* they have been shaped by reason. These are quite different views of the role of passions like anger in the moral life. Surveying the history of the person/sin distinction helps identify this important issue for examining the morality of emotions like anger. However, the fact that the person/sin distinction can be employed by thinkers who have opposing

positions on this issue is another reason why that distinction is inadequate in differentiating virtuous from sinful anger.

Prompted by Thomas's attempt to use—and ultimately reject—the person/sin distinction, this survey of the origin of the distinction in Augustine and its use leading up to and within Thomas's work helps illuminate some central issues in the broader question of the possibility of virtuous anger, and reveals why that distinction is ultimately inadequate—and thus was dropped by Thomas—in addressing those issues. This survey also provides a fascinating look at how Christian thinkers from Augustine to Thomas use sources from Scripture and tradition. In Thomas's case, study of his use of authorities such as Augustine and Jerome reveals how some of their material is crucially formative,<sup>72</sup> some is included but subverted for the sake of synthesis,<sup>73</sup> and some is taken seriously yet ultimately discarded. Augustine's person/sin distinction falls into the latter category. Tracing this distinction's birth and ultimate demise not only offers an interesting story of a living tradition at work, but also contributes to the study of the morality of anger.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas's use of Augustine's account of the Stoic/Peripatetic debate is a fine example of this influence.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas's appeal to Jerome's work on anger is a clear example of this subversion.