

❖ Other Voices ❖

The marks of anger are the same [as insanity]: eyes ablaze and glittering, a deep flush over all the face as blood boils up from the vitals, quivering lips, teeth pressed together, bristling hair standing on end, breath drawn in and hissing, the crackle of writhing limbs, groans and bellowing, speech broken off with words barely uttered, hands struck together too often, feet stamping the ground, the whole body in violent motion “menacing mighty wrath in mien,” the hideous horrifying face of swollen self-degradation – you would hardly know whether to call the vice hateful or ugly.

SENECA (4 BC - 65 AD) , *On Anger 1.1.3-4*

The vice of anger (as if it were the voice of reason!) will say something like this to the heart it has conquered: “The things that have been done to you cannot be borne patiently; indeed, to endure them patiently would be a sin; because if you do not stand up to them with great indignation, they will be heaped on you again and without limit.”

POPE GREGORY THE GREAT (C . 540 - 604) , *Morals on the Book of Job, 31.90*

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back – in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.

FREDERICK BUECHNER , *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC (1973)*

In some manner Christian love has reopened the space within which fear, and anxiety, and grief, and intense delight, and even anger, all have their full force. And correct love promises no departure from these other emotions – if anything, it requires their intensification.

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM , *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions (2001)*

Of the seven deadly sins, anger has long been the one with the best box of costumes. When the guy in the next car rages at you, he’s dangerous. When you rage at him, you’re just.

We can usually recognize the results of anger, especially in others, as destructive and evil. But there are times when we think our own anger is justified, say as a kind of fuel to fight injustice. There are times when we think it is holy.

FREDERICA MATHEWES - GREEN , *“Unrighteous Indignation,” Christianity Today (October 23, 2000)*

Who among us has not flared to sudden anger (perhaps accompanied by some indelicate international hand gestures), prompted perhaps by the actions of a rude driver yakking on his cell phone? Have we not all been roused to anger at news reports of child abuse or brutal murder or “ethnic cleansing”? That we are moved to anger by matters small and great, inconsequential and grave, is commonplace. Less common is knowing when, if ever, our anger is justified and what affects it has on our character.

J A Y W O O D, *“Bad Karma: Anger Management,” Books and Culture (July/August 2006)*

When it is good, anger is a passion for justice, motivated by love for others. We get angry when someone we care about is hurt or threatened. This person may be ourselves or a “neighbor whom we love as ourselves.” This is often most intensely expressed in families, where ties of love are strongest: novelist Alan Paton described one mother as “like a tigress for the child.” The fiercer the love and the greater the good at stake, the more intense our capacity for anger. Great love is the root of great anger. You don’t get angry unless you *care*...

Anger turns vicious, however, when it fights for its own selfish cause, not for justice, and when it fights dirty. That is, anger becomes a vice when there are problems with its target – whatever it is that makes us angry – or with the way we try to hit that target – how we express our anger.

R E B E C C A K O N Y N D Y K D E Y O U N G, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies (2009)*

We cannot live without love. And so to the soul who, through his special grace, clearly sees the exalted and wondrous goodness of God, and who knows that we are forever one with him in love, it is the most impossible thing that he could ever be angry. For anger and friendship are opposites.

I did not see any kind of anger in God – neither in passing nor for an extended time. The truth, as I perceive it, is that if he were to be even one iota angry, we would have no life, no place to be, no being.

J U L I A N O F N O R W I C H (F O U R T E E N T H C E N T U R Y), *from The Showings of Julian of Norwich: A New Translation, translated by Mirabai Starr (2013)*

Anger is an important part of the divine emotional life, since anger is an aspect of God’s love (both of the offender and of the victim), and is implicit in the notion of forgiveness, which involves the ‘giving up’ or waiving of the right to resentment (a form of anger). However ... God’s anger must always be expressed redemptively and creatively rather than destructively, such as in the pedagogy of the offender. Second, God’s anger must always be rational in the sense of being based both on rational motives and sufficient knowledge. Thus the irrationality and destructiveness that is frequently found in human anger is not present in divine anger.

A N A S T A S I A P H I L I P P A S C R U T T O N, *Thinking through Feeling: God, Emotion and Passibility (2011)*