

"Be angry, but do not sin": For a new understanding of Christian anger

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**“BE ANGRY, BUT DO NOT SIN”:
FOR A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF
CHRISTIAN ANGER**



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INTRODUCTION

From its earliest days, Christianity has debated about when and how force can be used to repel harm without incurring sin. Although moderation and restriction have often been advocated both on a personal and on a social level, strict passivity has rarely been the proposed solution in mainstream Christianity when individuals or nations are confronted with harm. The Just War tradition, in its many variations, was born precisely out of this desire to make sense of how force can be used in a Christian way. And it soon became the prevalent theory throughout Christianity to address issues of violence, war, and force in general.

What this thesis intends to argue is that Just War theory, despite all its pervasiveness, is flawed in some crucial aspects when scrutinized from a Christian viewpoint. Three such aspects seem to be especially relevant: Just War tradition is not grounded enough in Scripture; its *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* criteria do not protect in a satisfactory way the innocent who face harm; and it is a theory that is only reactive to force being imposed upon others. Because of these three flaws, it will be claimed that in the process of giving its support to Just War theory Christianity has largely forgotten an older, broader tradition. The “be angry, but do not sin” tradition has Scriptural and philosophical roots that, when combined, can bring a Christian virtue ethics to a much better understanding of when and how forceful intervention in the social sphere is required. At the very least, this anger tradition does not fall prey to the three criticisms that are addressed towards Just War – and that seems to make it especially valuable. Righteous anger, then, and not Just War, should be what guides Christianity in its thinking about how and when force can be used without incurring sin. That is the contention of this thesis.

The argument will unfold in three chapters. The first chapter will look at the Just War tradition and will show how pervasive an explanation for the use of force it is in

Christianity. There is a remarkable consistency in the support that is given to Just War – which brings together Christians coming from all kinds of times and viewpoints. This first chapter will also flesh out the three main questions already stated above that Just War theory leaves unaddressed. The second chapter will provide a larger framework for how one can think about anger as an emotion. This will be done on the one hand by looking at some early philosophical traditions and their contemporary reception; and on the other hand, by looking at Scripture and at some of the Fathers of the Church. Most of the theoretical work will be done in this chapter. First and foremost, its goal is to show how reflection in anger is a forgotten tradition, and a forgotten tradition with immense potential to think about how and when force can be used without incurring sin. Finally, the third chapter is where the novelty of this thesis will be developed. Most of the originality of this work will reside in the attempt to redefine the object of anger. Simultaneously, an effort will be made to show that anger understood as depicted here can be a powerful ally to some contemporary projects that use the language of virtue – most noticeably, the recent and promising project usually identified as Just Peacemaking. If successful, this thesis will persuade the reader of how promising anger is for Christians to think about force, while creating at the same time the sense that much work is still to be done.

In hindsight, a much stronger association between anger and zeal should have been explored and proposed. Likewise, some notes on the mode of anger – and not just its object – could have benefited this thesis immensely. These are certainly two points to develop in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

ON CHRISTIANITY AND FORCE

On Christianity and force: a disclaimer

One can hardly find a book introducing Catholic Social Teaching that does not offer at least a section on how Christians think about war.¹ This much was stated in the introduction: that from its earliest days, Christianity has debated about when and how force can be used to repel harm without incurring sin. Force is a most complex problem. There are obvious difficulties in reconciling the Gospel commands of love, forgiveness, peaceableness, and humility, for instance, with the need to prevent grave injustice resulting in the harm of the innocent. Just War is an attempt to do this reconciliation. It is also an attempt that became pervasive all throughout Christianity, a pervasiveness that remains actual in our contemporary Church. But, as it will be shown, it is a flawed attempt: the Just War tradition is not grounded in Scripture in a sufficient way; it leaves the innocent facing harm often unprotected; and it can only think about force reactively.

What this chapter intends to offer is not an exhaustive treatment of the origins, merits, or flaws of Just War theory.² If Just War is being discussed here it is only because there are questions to be asked about how Christians understand the use of force and its foundations that can be enlightened by discussing some issues related to Just War. Force, then, and the way Christianity thinks about the use of force, is the object of this chapter.

¹ A few scattered examples would be Joseph Milburn Thompson, *Introducing Catholic Social Thought* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010); Kenneth Himes and Lisa Cahill, editors, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005); or William Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008).

² For introductions to Just War theory, see María Pilar Aquino and Dietmar Mieth, *The Return of the Just War* (London: SCM Press, 2001); Tobias Winright and Laurie Johnston, editors, *Can War Be Just in the 21st Century: Ethicists Engage the Tradition* (New York: Orbis Books, 2015); Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); and, for an applied discussion of the theme, Kenneth Himes, *Targeted Killing and the Ethics of Drone Warfare* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

These pages intend to offer three things: firstly, some brief remarks on how prevalent Just War is as a justification for a Christian use of force; secondly, a discussion of some of the basic elements of an Augustinian and Thomistic Just War theory; and thirdly, a basic outline sketching what the main dissatisfaction with Just War theory consists in – raising the flaws mentioned above. Hopefully, these three issues taken together will be enough to foster interest in the need for the development of a new way of looking at force in Christianity.

A widespread justification

The vast majority of Christian moralists who think about force would probably agree with the unsurprising affirmation that throughout the history of Christianity the recourse to force is only accepted – when it is accepted – for lack of a better option.³ This is something that can be seen consistently throughout history: the use of force calls for great caution. No wonder, then, that from early on Christianity has sought criteria for clarifying when and how force could legitimately be used. Saint Augustine's rudimentary formulation, influenced both by Saint Ambrose and by Cicero, is what decisively came to guide all subsequent thought: in order to be permissible, force has to be commanded by a legitimate authority; has to be rightly intentioned; and has to be the instrument of a just

³ Contemporary authors like James Turner Johnson or Nigel Biggar would be cases of writers who, for different reasons, tend to see force as a non-exceptional situation. This is a rare position, though. For James Turner Johnson, see "The Broken Tradition," *The National Interest* no. 45 (1996): 27-36; and also "Can a Pacifist Have a Conversation with Augustine? A Response to Alain Epp Weaver," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29.1 (2001): 87-93. For Nigel Biggar, see *In Defence of War* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), especially 8 and 61. Johnson's and Biggar's positions are challenged by James Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts: Essays on Nonviolence, War, and Conscience* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); and also by Alain Epp Weaver, "Unjust Lies, Just Wars? A Christian Pacifist Conversation with Augustine," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29.1 (2001): 51-78.

cause.⁴ Augustine's three criteria have become the basis for Just War theory, and remain in use despite all the corrections and additions that history has brought to them. In fact, Alfred Whitehead might have been correct when saying that all Western philosophy consists in a footnote to Plato; but it would not be inaccurate to paraphrase him and say that in like manner all Just War theory is but a footnote to Saint Augustine.⁵ A proof for this is the fact that Christian contemporary justifications for the use of force are constantly indebted to this way of thinking. Two examples can be illuminating.

Official Catholic documents provide a good first insight. Texts referring to war from an explicitly theoretical point of view are not numerous. Still, the ones that were produced over the last decades show how dominant Just War theory is in thinking about force. Note, for instance, Pope Pius XI's 1922 Encyclical Letter *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*; Pope John XXIII 1962's Encyclical Letter *Peace on Earth*; the Vatican II's 1965 *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*; or the USCCB's 1983 document on *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Other documents could be added. But what these four have in common, and the point where they matter, is that there is a twofold agreement in them: on the one hand, a general presumption against war; and, on the other hand, the resource to a vocabulary of justice in order to validate forceful interventions whenever indispensable. *Gaudium et Spes* summarizes this point well in its §79, opening the door for the undertaking of "military action for the just defense of the people." Military action is not the rule, as all documents make clear. But if the *just defense* of the people requires it, then force might be equated as a possibility even for the Christian.

⁴ Saint Augustine of Hippo, "Reply to Faustus the Manichean," in *Writings in Connection with the Manichean Heresy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), §75-76.

⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 63.

The similarities with a Thomistic justification for the use of force based on the good of the commonweal, as will be seen, are quite evident.

Another important note on the way official Catholic documents understand force is that justice is not just the reason for its validation. Justice might be what occasionally validates the use of force – but, even most importantly, justice is what stands likewise at the basis for the overall presumption against war. As *Gaudium and Spes* also reads, “peace is to be grounded on justice” (§78). Both Pope John XXIII’s condemnation of a nuclear war in *Peace on Earth*, and Pope Paul VI’s controversial remarks on just revolutions on the 1967 *Populorum Progressio*, call for a strong commitment to peace claiming that the harm following from either nuclear war or a popular revolution would be contrary to reason. Especially the sections on *Peace on Earth* under the section “Attainment of the common good is the purpose of the public authority” (§53 ff) can be useful to understand the link that exists between reason, common good, and justice. Once again, the terms used by Pope John and by Pope Paul to place restrictions on the possibility of using force are highly indebted to the vocabulary developed within the Just War tradition. This is the association that in the next chapters will be challenged. For now, the important step is to notice its existence and wide influence.

Besides contemporary official Church documents, contemporary theological discussions are likewise revealing of how prevailing the Just War tradition is in guiding the way Christians think about force. Perhaps the most explicit examples of this would be the recent attempts by Robert P. George and by George Weigel to recover for Just War theory a place of prominence in the American public life.⁶ Their claims might at times be

⁶ Both George Weigel and Robert P. George would revise the formulation suggested above mentioning the existence of a general presumption against war, in order to say that what Christianity calls for is a general

contentious. Nonetheless, these are two relevant authors whose impact – especially on a non-theological audience – should not be dismissed. George’s and Weigel’s positions are in many ways sympathetic to James Turner Johnson’s reading of Augustine. Weigel, for instance, argues in one of his often-quoted essays in *First Things* that “proportionate and discriminate use of armed force must aim at the construction of the peace of order, which is composed of security, justice, and freedom.”⁷ There is no real recognition in either author that force will constitute a state of exception: as Robert P. George said in an interview in 2001, force can only be used in last resort, but there are situations when “leaders of nations can be justified – and even morally obligated – to use force.”⁸ The connection between force and the justice vocabulary is quite obvious in these two writers.

An alternative theological justification for a Christian use of force can be found in the debate about evil that trended during the 70s. In all honesty, this is a not a debate about force but about evil and the ontological status of evil. Nonetheless, if one is able to do away with a certain degree of inaccuracy in what is being written here, it is still a debate that can have a word to say in this chapter. So: unlike Robert George or George Weigel, whose retrieval of Just War theory focused primarily on what a just cause for war is, the dispute that brought together people like Joseph Fuchs, Bruno Schüller, Peter Knauer, or Louis

presumption for justice – which might in some cases even require intentional harm. For George Weigel, see *Tranquillitas Ordinis: The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and the more recent *Against the Grain: Christianity and Democracy, War and Peace* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2008). For Robert George, see *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001), especially the chapter on “The Tyrant State.”

⁷ George Weigel, “Just War and Iraq wars,” *First Things*, April 2007, accessed March 4th, 2017, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/04/just-war-and-iraq-wars>.

⁸ Robert George, “Robert George on the demands of a Just War,” *News at Princeton*, October 2001, accessed March 4th, 2017, <https://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/A97/85/17M40/index.xml>.

Janssens focuses instead on issues related to right intention.⁹ Linguistic precision is important in this debate: much of it has to do with distinguishing ontic from intrinsic evil, pre-moral from moral evil, direct and indirect intention. Whether one agrees that this is a useful debate or not, what seems clear is that the reason why it exists comes from the difficulty that moral theologians had with justifying in Christian terms the use of force. But here, in a way that is perhaps unseen both in the official documents of the Catholic Church, and in Weigel's and George's writings, what stands out is the desire to understand what exactly *is* evil – hence impacting in the understanding of what exactly *is* force. A reference to Joseph Fuchs will be enough to make the point clear.

Fuchs' "The Absoluteness of Moral Terms" tries to establish the basis for arguing that "killing in a morally justified war of defense and the use of contraceptives in certain cases of conflict would not be morally culpable." In other words, Fuchs claims that moral theology has overlooked the distinction "between *evil* and *wickedness*; that is, between evil in the *pre*moral (physical, ontic) sense and evil in the *moral* sense (wickedness)." ¹⁰ Again, the reference to Fuchs has to be made here with caution, as he is writing on evil and not directly on force. The whole article is largely an effort to revisit Saint Thomas Aquinas's idea of what a human act is – something Aquinas does in detail in the *Summa Theologiae*, in its I-II Q.18.¹¹ And in this effort, Fuchs contends that "an action cannot be judged morally at all, considered purely in itself, but only alongside its 'circumstances'

⁹ The debate is published in Charles Curran and Richard McCormick, *Moral Norms and Catholic Tradition: Readings in Moral Theology*, no. 1 (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

¹⁰ Joseph Fuchs, "The Absoluteness of Moral Terms," in Curran and McCormick, *Moral Norms*, 118. Italics in the original text.

¹¹ All references to the *Summa Theologiae* come from *New Advent*, accessed March 4th 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>.

and the ‘intention’.”¹² Thinking about the importance of circumstances and of intentions has relevant consequences. Most significantly, it entails that no action can be judged “morally in its materiality (killing, wounding, going to the moon).”¹³ Or, to employ the terms that have been used in these previous pages, this entails that the use of force can only be assessed morally in an assessment that is mindful also of the intentions of the agent and of the circumstances of the act. This is a subtle way of justifying the use of force without acquiescing to the force *per se* – something George and Weigel, for instance, cannot really do. For George and for Weigel, the use of force is justified even though force is recognized as an unfortunate evil that must be tolerated for the sake of something else; whereas for Fuchs et. al., force is in some situations not an evil at all, because some necessary forceful actions might bring about a kind of violence that is ontic, but which nevertheless is still not moral.

Force surely is a pervading concern in Christian thought. And Just War, together with Just War’s vocabulary, surely has been a dominant way to overcome such a concern. This is a good segue to turn attention to the work of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

A common foundation

Although Saint Augustine might very much be the root of Christian thought on Just War, this is a story that cannot be written without prime reference to Saint Thomas’ clarifications and developments. All that can be done in this section is sketching out some points in Thomas’ thought that are relevant for the discussion being offered on the relation between Christianity and force. Five such points are worth a brief mention.

¹² Fuchs, “Moral Terms,” 124.

¹³ Fuchs, “Moral Terms,” 120.

In the first place, attention should be paid to the formulation of Aquinas' question on war. What he asks is "whether it is always sinful to wage war?" (II-II Q. 40). Even though at times Aquinas entertains objections that are patently absurd, the formulation seems to be in itself telling of what the answer will be. From the outset, it reveals that war will in the best-case scenario be sinful only at times. The issue is whether it can be said not to be sinful at other times, or whether indeed it is sinful at all times. This is basic Aristotelian logic. Aquinas is asking whether a particular affirmation (of the kind "some S are P") is compatible with a universal affirmation (of the kind "all S are P"); or whether it is compatible instead with a particular negation (of the kind "some S are not P"). The starting point is what is the most noteworthy here: at least some wars are sinful, and in order not to be considered sinful a particular war will have to show how that is the case. This is not necessarily a presumption against war, but it appears to be a kind of general presumption for the presence of sin in war – presumably because of the kind of force that has to be employed in the course of a war. This question, therefore, is Thomas' attempt at showing when can a war be fought without incurring sin.

The general theorization of whether war is always sinful is dealt with in only one article, where Saint Thomas famously retrieves the Augustinian formulation that a legitimate authority, a just cause, and a right intention are simultaneously needed in order for a war not to be sinful. Furthermore, all the three requirements focus on the need to promote the good of the commonweal – in a variation of Saint Augustine's justification, which primarily focused on the need to promote peace in the earthly city (something Aquinas also recognizes on a.1 r.3).¹⁴ In what can be used as a summary of Aquinas'

¹⁴ For Augustine's thoughts on peace as that to be achieved in the earthly city, see Saint Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2009), especially Book XIX.

position, war is not always sinful because “it is necessary sometimes for a man to act otherwise [not refraining from using force] for the common good, or for the good of those with whom he is fighting” (r.2). Nothing here is surprising.

What is surprising is that for Aquinas war is not addressed under the virtue of justice. Rather, it is addressed under the vices against charity.¹⁵ That is the second point to pay attention to. Charity, as a theological virtue, has as its object not anything located in human reason or appetites. That is the object of the cardinal virtues, discussed by Thomas in II-II Q.61. Instead, charity has as its object “God Himself” (I-II Q.62 a.2). More specifically, charity is directed towards union with God, or towards spiritual union (I-II Q.62 a.2). For a modern reader, this will raise a great deal of surprise. Thinking that force might be required because something is right and due would be fitting to a contemporary reader – and that would mean that force would come under the virtue of justice (I-II Q.61 a.4). But thinking that force might be required because it is contained in our love of God, which in the same act demands us to love our neighbor (II-II Q.25 a.1), is quite an unexpected move. That, however, is precisely what Aquinas means: the love of the neighbor demands the preservation of the commonweal. And the three criteria that St. Thomas recovers from St. Augustine in order to say in what circumstances can a war be waged without sin, all have the good of the commonweal constantly in mind. Unusual a justification for the use of force in the eyes of a modern reader as this may be, it does impact greatly on the way Christianity came to think about force.

The third point to make on how St. Thomas understands force is that his treatment of force-related issues is quite comprehensive, even if a bit scattered. Two other questions

¹⁵ Richard Miller has a good article on the way neighbor love shapes Aquinas’ understanding of war. See “Aquinas and the Presumption against Killing and War,” *The Journal of Religion* 82:2 (2002).

directly related to force are worth citing: the one on sedition (II-II Q.42); and the one on murder (II-II Q.64). Interestingly, these two questions are addressed under the study of different virtues. Just as in the case of war, sedition is seen as a vice against the theological virtue of charity. It is a vice against union, against the commonweal, and against the command to love God and neighbor. Whereas murder, as Saint Thomas sees it, is not a matter of a lack of charity – but a matter of justice, which, as was noted, has to do with what is right and due. Nonetheless, even though it is addressed under the virtue of justice, murder is deemed not to be sinful in situations where it is necessary in order to “safeguard the common good” (a.2 and a.6). And so, although murder deals with the injury done to a neighbor, in many ways it does so employing the same language that is employed when thinking about war and sedition – the language of the preservation and promotion of the common good and of the love for the neighbor. Awareness of this common element is important: generally speaking, force is justified for St. Thomas on the grounds of an offense committed towards the good of the commonweal, therefore requiring a reply – or a reaction – from those who legitimately have authority for the employment of such force. Most of what will be said in the third chapter will draw from this third point.

A fourth point to mention diverges slightly from the analysis of these concrete actions where force is employed. A great deal will be said about anger over the next two chapters. Still, taking a brief look at St. Thomas’ understanding of the matter is relevant. In a specific sense, anger is a passion related to the virtue of temperance. It can become vicious when acting against meekness (II-II Q.158) – but it is not necessarily a vicious passion. When thinking about the passions in a general sense, Aquinas sees anger as standing in relation to justice, or to the lack of justice. In his words,

anger desires evil as being a means of just vengeance. Consequently, anger is towards those to whom we are just or unjust: since vengeance is an act of justice, and wrong-doing is an act of injustice. Therefore both on the part of the cause, viz. the harm done by another, and on the part of the vengeance sought by the angry man, it is evident that anger concerns those to whom one is just or unjust (I-II Q. 46 a.7).

The key term here is probably “just vengeance.” Some similarities can be found in the argument that in II-II Q.40 a.7 is put forth about killing in self-defense. Above all else, what matters is that anger will not be sinful as long as it is regulated by reason; and as long as it is not immoderate (II-II Q.158 a.2). And fulfilled these two requisites, anger becomes a legitimate way to react when one has been injured – or, to be more precise, when one has been the object of someone else’s slight (I-II Q. 47 a.2). If slight is what one is reacting to, or if slight is what one is justly avenging, then force can be employed. Although anger justifies the use of force in a different way than the need to preserve the good of the commonweal does, there is a most significant similarity between all these situations: in every case seen so far, force is justified as a reaction done after harm has been imposed upon an individual or upon a nation. This leads to the fifth and final point to be made in this section.

A relevant distinction in the Thomistic account of the passions is the one that is made between the passions belonging to the concupiscible part of the of the soul and the ones belonging to the irascible part of the soul. Especially in what is written in I Q.82 a.1, Thomas says that

There is a passion through which the soul is simply inclined to seek what is suitable according to the senses, and to fly from what is hurtful, and this is called the concupiscible: and another whereby an animal resists the attacks of any agents that hinder what is suitable and inflict harm; and this is called

the irascible, whence we say that its object is something arduous, because its tendency is to overcome and rise above obstacles.

To be inclined, and to be repelled, are movements of the soul. This is one of the elements according to which the passions are to be distinguished. In addition, the passions in each part of the soul are said to be distinguished according to the “object of each of these powers” (I-II Q. 23 a.1). This way of looking at passions came to have great influence in the future. Specifically, it came to have great influence in the way anger was understood – as anger was in Aquinas’ schema one of the passions that belonged to the irascible part of the soul. Anger in the understanding of St. Thomas is something to be controlled, that is provoked by something, that reacts to events, and that is prompted by injustice (as said earlier). Again, just as in the point previously noticed, anger becomes a justification for the use of force because of its relation with what is due to someone. But it is reactive – just like the need to protect the commonweal, mentioned in the third point of this section, is reactive. The task this thesis is undertaking is showing how force seen only from this reactive perspective is something that faces obvious challenges when confronted with the greater Christian tradition. The following section will point out briefly to two such challenges, in preparation to exploring further what an alternative Christian understanding of force could look like. But before moving on, one final comment on Aquinas can be helpful.

James Keenan, following Leonard Boyle, constantly calls attention to the fact that the *Summa Theologiae* was written as a study book.¹⁶ The idea that the *Summa* helped young Dominican friars in their formation to lead in the future a regular pastoral life is

¹⁶ See Leonard Boyle, "The Context of Thomas Aquinas's 'Summa Theologiae'," *Rivista di Filosofia neo-Scolastica* 92, no. 1 (2000): 3-25.

something that should not be forgotten: Aquinas is offering answers to questions that these young men would find over the course of their ministerial lives, questions that would probably be, at least, frequent enough in the course of a Dominican's pastoral life to deserve being studied alongside the rest of the issues dealt with in the *Summa Theologiae*. True, the fact that so many questions related to force are addressed in the Summa might be irrelevant, or pure coincidence, or mere intellectual diatribe. However, it is probably telling of how much these issues would be thought of as being in the order of the day. This is yet another confirmation of how prevalent the concern with the use of force has been in Christianity: what Aquinas writes on murder, sedition, war, etc., are all attempts in his times to make sense of a reality that called for answers not specifically addressed in the text of the Gospels. And perhaps this same concern with thinking about force due to the signs of the times is something that Christianity needs nowadays: Aquinas' account became canonical, but there is no reason not to keep looking at force in an attempt to see it more and more in terms that both respond to the needs of the times; and that reflect what the Christian tradition and revelation are. As it stands, the Just War language so influenced by Aquinas seems to pay attention to signs of the times that are not necessarily ours.

Three fundamental difficulties

Despite its widespread prevalence and despite its usefulness since the very early days of the Church, this way of justifying force seems to be defective in three major regards. Firstly, Just War can hardly be said to have a strong validation in Scripture. Secondly, as a theory Just War only addresses harm reactively. And thirdly, because of this reactivity Just War often leaves unprotected the innocent who face cruelty. These three criticisms of an understanding of force that is based on the Just War vocabulary will be

explored in this section. The flaws they reveal will form the basis for an alternative view of Christian force to be proposed over the next two chapters.

Firstly, then, there is the Scriptural problem. This is a criticism that can be formulated in simple terms: basically, the Jesus of the Gospels does not seem to encourage the idea that force can be used in defense of the commonweal, or in defense of those with whom we are fighting (which were Aquinas' two justifications for war in II-II Q.40 a.1 r.2 – unsurprisingly not primarily backed up by any Scriptural reference). As it has often been remarked, the contrary is rather the case. Jesus lauds a peaceful way of living often, even in the face of aggression; and Jesus condemns the temporal messianic views of His contemporaries with vehemence.¹⁷ At no point in the Gospels can one see Jesus critically enquire whether a just cause, a right intention, and a legitimate authority can validate the use of force – either for the goal of promoting spiritual union, or with the goal of loving one's neighbor.¹⁸ Those who claim that force can be used basing their arguments on the Just War vocabulary occasionally refer to Old Testament passages, where God uses violence either for or against Israel. But those arguments always sound thin. The amount of extrapolation that has to be made in order to work around the fact that the Gospels neither foresee nor in any way validate the language of Just War is immense. And for that reason, Scripture will remain a powerful ally for those who object to the Just War language as a way of justifying in Christian terms the use of force.

¹⁷ A particularly influential book for the defense of these claims is John Howard Yoder's classic *The Politics of Jesus* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1972). From a Catholic perspective, Lisa Cahill is probably the most well researched and enlightening writer on the theme. See *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

¹⁸ Aquinas involves Jesus in his justification for war a bit more in II-II Q.40 a.1 r.3, where Mt 10:34 is briefly mentioned to defend Augustine's claims that peace is what is to be sought in the earthly city.

A good example of a semi-influential criticism of all those attempts to justify the use of force based on this language inherited from Aquinas is that of Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas is a controversial author for a number of different reasons. But his criticism of a Christian use of force is often founded on a Scriptural argument: Jesus, Hauerwas says, constantly and coherently condemns any kind of use of force. His Kingdom is peaceful, as one of Hauerwas' most important books reads.¹⁹ There is a close relation in Hauerwas between human sin, personal transformation, peace, and the cross, which ultimately is manifested in the ideal of Christian discipleship. In his words, "the very heart of following the way of God's kingdom involves nothing else than learning to be like God. We learn to be like God by following the teachings of Jesus and thus learning to be his disciples."²⁰ It is with this background that Hauerwas introduces the love commands in Mt 5:38-48, emphasizing that we are called to be like God: "perfect as God is perfect." This entails "nothing less than that men and women should love their enemies and forgive one another," and is backed up by the fact that "there is no indication the rigorous demands of the Sermon on the Mount were meant only as some unrealizable ideal."²¹ Hauerwas is adamant on this point, countering the idea that violence can be used as a form of charity and suggesting that

¹⁹ See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). Hauerwas is a prolific writer. Some articles worth noting are "Pacifism: some philosophical considerations," *Faith and Philosophy* vol. 2 (1985): 99-104; "Peacemaking," *The Furrow* vol. 36 no. 10 (1985): 605-612; "September 11, 2001: A Pacifist Response," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:2 (2002): 425-433; and "War and Peace," in *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics and Life* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013): 120-136. Also of interest is the book published with William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

²⁰ Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 75.

²¹ Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.

non-violence is a virtue that one can grow into.²² All in all, Hauerwas writes, “Christians must acquire a spirituality which will make them capable of being faithful in the face of the inexorable tragedies their convictions entail.”²³

What is impressive about Hauerwas is that this brief summary of his argument is not suggested only as the right textual interpretation of Mt 5:38-48 and of Jesus’ words on the kingdom. Hauerwas really intends to say that the Christian qualifier on the expression Christian ethics implies the actual following of Jesus whatever the consequences. So much he does, for instance, when charging Christians with the task of being peacemakers who have no limit to their forgiveness, as in Mt 18:35.²⁴ These are the Christians and this is the Church that will be able to challenge a world that thinks peace is not possible. These are the Christians and this is the Church that will show how “pacifism is not first of all a prohibition, but an affirmation that God wills to rule his creation not through violence but by love.”²⁵ And these are the Christians, finally, and this is the Church, that will always hold that their union with Christ in His resurrection is also a union with Christ in His death (Rom 6: 3-5).²⁶ Hauerwas is not primarily interested in politics, political structures, or political replies to particular problems. His concern is with showing Christians that being peaceful is being what Jesus is – and that such a thing is what every and any Christian must always strive to be.

²² Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 114 and 123.

²³ Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 145.

²⁴ Hauerwas, “Peacemaking,” 609. From a Catholic perspective, see Walter Kasper, *Mercy* (New Jersey: Paulist, 2014). Cardinal Kasper offers an account of sin and forgiveness that is not very distant from Hauerwas’. Cfr. especially chapter VI.

²⁵ Hauerwas, “Pacifism,” 99.

²⁶ Hauerwas, “September 11,” 427.

The objections brought to a Christian use of force by the work of someone like Stanley Hauerwas are quite persuasive. In a special way, they are persuasive because they make use of the Scripture in a way that is learned and proportionate. Nonetheless, they also leave a general sense of dissatisfaction when one looks at Scripture in a more narrative way – narrative being a term so dear to Hauerwas, ironically. In fact, the Jesus of Mt 5: 38-48 is the same Jesus of Mt 21:12-13, who casts out the money lenders from the temple; and the same Jesus as Lk 12:49, who says He has come to bring fire to earth; and the same Jesus as Mk 3:5 who looks at the Pharisees with anger because of their sadness of heart. Hauerwas' Jesus seems to be conveniently read through the lenses of the Sermon on the Mount – no doubt a crucial text, but one that should admit to some complexity. In the next chapter, some biblical scholarship will be brought to this discussion. The goal will be to ask questions about what anger really means in the Scriptural tradition. What is important for now is noticing this: although a Scriptural criticism of the Just War language seems to be persuasive, even when sketched in only the briefest terms, there is still the need to understand how and when can force be used by Christians. Here lies the second criticism that the Just War language must face.

This second question has to do with what should trigger force. The long tradition in Christianity that sees either the desire for peace, or the need to attend to the good of the commonweal, as the reasons that would justify the use of force, seems to leave too big a gap for cruelty to happen. Surprisingly, this is a reproach that is rarely made. But Just War, especially in the way the Church has looked at it, has developed over time as a mechanism that is reactive to harm being done and ongoing. Looking at the way the international community and its institutions act in times of conflict is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, it is easy to find examples where harm was inflicted upon innocents,

because force was said not to be employable in a specific situation for instance due to lack of a legitimate authority to call for it. This reactive way of thinking about force, which Just War espouses, and which is present both in the way the international community and in the way the Church operate, should be seen as highly problematic for Christian ethicists. It should also prompt Christian ethicists to develop a new model to think and use force – one where in the face of harm Christians can do more than just deciding whether to war or not war, which is what happens when Just War is the mainstream theory for the Church to think about force. Ultimately, that is really what the question is about: not so much revamping, rethinking, or reformulating Just War theory. The time might have come to admit that as a Christian theory, Just War is highly flawed.²⁷ Rather, the challenge is for Christianity to find a completely new way to understand force – one that is inspired, and even explicitly derived, from the Scripture and from tradition. Ambition seems to be required here.

Finally, the third objection deals with the fact that because of the way it is construed Just War often leaves unprotected the innocent facing cruelty. This is an objection that will

²⁷ The argument being developed here, stating basically that Just War theory is a flawed model for Christianity to think about force which should altogether be eschewed, has been the subject of some discussion of late. Although the reasons for the rejection of Just War are at points different from the ones espoused here, the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held in Rome in April 2016, and sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called for Christianity to replace all forms of Just War theory with what is called a “just peace” model. The proceedings of the conference can be found in <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2016/05/09/first-blog-post/#more-4>. Two responses to this conference are meaningful. Firstly, Mark Allman and Tobias Winright’s article in *Commonweal* arguing for the preservation of Just War theory as the Christian approach to force (“Protecting Thy Neighbour: Why the Just War Tradition is Still Indispensable,” in *Commonweal*, June 17, 2016, accessed April 19th, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/protect-thy-neighbor>). And secondly, Lisa Cahill’s response to Allman’s and Winright’s article, also in *Commonweal*, with a thorough exposition of recent Papal teachings that would support the endeavors of the conference (“A Church for Peace? Why Just War Theory Isn’t Enough,” in *Commonweal*, July 11, 2016, accessed April 19th, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/church-peace>).

briefly be developed especially throughout the third chapter. In its full length, it is unfortunately a bit too extensive to be dealt with in a thesis as short as this one: it should first and foremost bring into question matters related to the intricate definitions of what exactly is the demarcation between the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello*, concretely calling attention to the incongruent exclusion of a prohibition of attacking the innocent in the criteria constituting the *jus ad bellum*.²⁸ What can be sketchily mentioned in this regard is only one simple thing: there is a gap between the criteria to engage in war and the criteria on how to behave in war that seems to lead to the normalization of a vocabulary of what is necessary in war, usually resorting to notions like collateral damage or necessary civilian casualties. Usually, these are formulations that come about when discussing the requisites of last resort and of proportionality – and which were brought to public discussion in all their extension during the Bush invasion of Iraq. This is a seriously problematic vocabulary to any sort of Christian ethics that attempts to think about force. The normalization, as a consequence of the application of some *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* principles, of situations where the innocent are exposed to harm, can hardly ever find any backing either in the Scripture or in the broader tradition of the Church. In order to say that the harming of the innocent is justified because of the desire to bring about peace, or union, or charity, Christian Just War theorists must explain better how this language of necessity and of collateral damage would be compatible with the basic tenants of Christian faith. And unless

²⁸ Most of what would be under discussion in an investigation like this one would pertain the principles of proportionality and last resource. There is a thorough article published on this topic by Carsten Stahn. Although his argument focuses on the need to develop a *jus post bellum*, the criticism addressed towards the rigid separation of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* is noteworthy. See “‘*Jus ad bellum*’, ‘*jus in bello*’... ‘*jus post bellum*’? – Rethinking the Conception of the Law of Armed Force”, in *European Journal of International Law*, published November 2006, accessed April 18th 2017, 17 (5): 921-943, <https://academic.oup.com/ejil/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/ejil/chl037>.

this language can be said to exist for the actual and positive protection of the innocent, it will likely always be seriously flawed in Christian terms.

Summing up

Force, and how the use of force is understood in Christianity, was said to be this chapter's object. Three contentions were made in it. The first one said that the Just War tradition is Christianity's dominant way of thinking about force. This is a widespread justification, and one that can be seen both in Church's documents and in theological disputes. The second contention fleshed out the most relevant parts of Saint Thomas Aquinas' argument on war. It was said that with Aquinas war is thought as being at the service of charity, promoting the union of the commonweal, reacting to harm being imposed on the common good. The third and final contention was that thinking of force in the language of Just War is, to put it bluntly, a flawed decision. Besides the lack of Scriptural backing, it seems to indulge in a reactive way of seeing harm that has often had nefarious consequences. With these three contentions in mind, the next chapter will ask what the alternative to the Just War language could be like. The answer will be that anger can be this alternative – if thought of in the right way.

CHAPTER TWO

ON CHRISTIANITY AND ANGER

On Christianity and anger: a clarification

The first chapter tried to show that the use of force that Just War theories unleash is problematic. It lacks Scriptural backing, it is largely a reactive theory, and it ends up leaving the innocent exposed to cruelty too often. All things considered, Just War does not seem to be a fruitful way for Christianity to think about how and when force can be used. For that reason, this chapter will do a bit of archeology on the origins and history of anger – in order to build the argument that anger, and not Just War, can be a better way for Christians to think about force. Unlike Just War, it is possible to find scriptural validation for anger; it is reasonable to say that anger is proactive; and it is legitimate to claim that an anger that is righteous will have as its main concern the protection of the innocent facing cruelty.

This calls for three major investigations. The first one is tracing the roots of anger in the complex plan of the Greeks' understanding of emotions. Anger is a stoic obsession – but it is also a Homeric and an Aristotelian concern. There is plenty of recent scholarship both on the emotions in general, and in the emotion of anger in particular. A good survey of some of these major authors can be helpful to situate what in the third chapter will be argued. The second investigation of this chapter will look at how the Christian tradition understood and talked about anger. There is some scattered interest from the Fathers of the Church on the topic. Furthermore, there is plenty in the Scriptures about anger, anger's causes, and anger's effects. This section will be an important foundation for the next chapter. Finally, the third investigation will focus on how recent Christian scholars have been looking at anger. Although there is not a great deal written on the issue by contemporary moral theologians, there is enough to say that a discussion is actually taking

place. Unfortunately, as will be claimed, this recent scholarship on anger has been a bit off the mark in its conclusions and stands in need of some correction.

Overall, the most important clarification to make in the beginning of this chapter is that anger is not a univocal term. While it might be a familiar word, history shows how multi-layered it actually is.

The roots of anger

Tracing the roots of anger requires patience: it is necessary to understand first what the emotions are if one truly wants to appreciate what anger is. The work of Richard Sorabji, David Konstan, and William Harris, has over the years become seminal in the study of the emotions. However, a fitting starting point for a discussion on the nature and content of the emotions are the contributions of Martha Nussbaum. Over the last decades, Nussbaum became a figure of cult, influencing thinkers well beyond the domains of philosophy or of theory of culture. For that reason, starting this section by taking a look at her argument on the emotions might be the best thing to do.

There is a symbiotic relation between Nussbaum, Konstan, Sorabji, and Harris that would make the starting point for this discussion always arbitrary. Given the fact that Nussbaum is likely the most influential of all these authors – an affirmation founded on nothing but the fact that both the United Nations and *The New Yorker* took interest in her – the arbitrariness might overall be justified.²⁹ In a nutshell, Nussbaum's argument is that

²⁹ See for instance Rachel Aviv, "The Philosopher of Feelings," in *New Yorker*, July 25, 2016, accessed 20th December 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/25/martha-nussbaums-moral-philosophies>; or UNDP, *Maldives Human Development Report 2014*, accessed 4th March 2017, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/maldives_hdr2014_full_report_0.pdf.

emotions are cognitive in nature.³⁰ They are not feelings as feelings are popularly characterized, in the sense that emotions are not uncritical physical reactions to the world that surrounds us. Rather, emotions differ from feelings characterized in the aforementioned way in that they embody judgements about the world. One must note the fact that in recent years, Nussbaum – who in the past has written on the most diverse topics – has focused her research mostly on two projects: the Human Development Approach, commonly known as the Capabilities Approach; and the development of a theory of the emotions.³¹ The idea that emotions are cognitive in nature is thus not a secondary point in Nussbaum’s intellectual activity – quite the contrary. It is a prime concern of hers, and an indication of how serious a need she considers the development of this new theory of the emotions to be.

Nussbaum builds her theory of the emotions in two ways: by theorizing; and by exemplifying, or by illustrating her claims. The theorizing part has become extensive over

³⁰ The interview in the *New Yorker* mentioned in note 26 is a good introduction to this point. In detail, Nussbaum develops the issue in *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially ch. 4. There, Nussbaum says that her argument is that “emotions just are cognitions, and nothing more” (328). Emotions are not regarded as feelings, but as responses elicited to external circumstances: emotion-cognitions are “forms of evaluative judgement that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person’s own control great importance for the person’s own flourishing. Emotions are thus, in effect, acknowledgments of neediness and lack of self-sufficiency.” This is taken to an extreme, with Nussbaum eventually refusing to draw any distinction between emotion and thought – both having to do with the attraction, or repulsion, that humans feel about something, being therefore led to action as a consequence of such attraction or repulsion. Although this is not made explicit in the interview, Nussbaum seems to be reacting to a view of the emotions that is void of reason – something similar to MacIntyre’s criticism of moral emotivism, which will be mentioned at a later stage of this thesis.

³¹ For the development of her capabilities approach, see Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); for her theory of the emotions, see in addition to *Upheavals of Thought* especially *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

the years. *Upheavals of Thought* is arguably the text where Nussbaum explains what the emotions are in most detail.³² But *Political Emotions*, for instance, or the recently-published *Anger and Forgiveness*, are also important components of this project.³³ In fact, *Anger and Forgiveness* risks becoming the textbook for someone seeking introduction to Nussbaum's thought – as in the very end of the book, three short appendixes are presented summarizing some of the key themes in her writings. The first of those appendixes is a four-page summary of *Upheavals of Thought*, where Nussbaum says that her argument in that lengthy book sets a defense for “a conception of emotions according to which they all involve intentional thought or perception directed at an object (...) and some kind of evaluative appraisal of that object made from the agent's own personal viewpoint.”³⁴ The fundamentals of this theory of the emotions are built in three steps: the cognitive content of the emotions does not always necessarily involve “linguistically formulable propositions”; emotions are formed partially by societal circumstances; and emotions develop in human beings before language or even before the capacity to individuate objects.³⁵ This is a neat summary of what Nussbaum's theory of the emotions is – with the advantage of being written by Nussbaum herself.

This theorizing of the emotions is made more concrete when Nussbaum decides to exemplify, or to illustrate it. That happens in *Anger and Forgiveness*, as will be shown in the end of this chapter. But that is also what happens in *Love's Knowledge*, where

³² See Diana Fritz Cates, "Conceiving Emotions: Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31, no. 2 (2003): 325-41, for a good review of *Upheavals of Thought*.

³³ See Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), ch. 7. See also *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Appendix A.

³⁴ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, 251.

³⁵ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, 252-254.

Nussbaum tries to show what relevance it has to say both that the emotions are cognitive in nature, and that they embody judgements about the world. The Stoic and Aristotelian foundations of this understanding of the emotions are explicitly recognized by Nussbaum in general.³⁶ But in *Love's Knowledge*, they are made explicit from the beginning – in combination with an exciting indebtedness to Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and to Ann Beatie's short story "Learning to Fall." Love is the emotion that Nussbaum chooses to illustrate, showing how cognition works in emotions.

In the essay that gives its name to *Love's Knowledge*, Nussbaum provides the reader with a number of contrasting, extreme views. For instance, the view is presented that knowledge of love is to be attained by "a detached, unemotional, exact intellectual scrutiny" (a position ascribed to Plato and Locke).³⁷ Or in the other extreme, Zeno's Stoic argument is presented in which knowledge of love is said to be given in suffering: the pain of losing what once existed brings about a *cataleptic* condition that reveals the existing love.³⁸ None of these two initial positions convinces Nussbaum, though. Her own view is one that

insists that knowledge of love is not a state or function of the solitary person at all, but a complex way of being, feeling, and interacting with another person. To know one's own love is to trust it, to allow oneself to be exposed. It is, above all, to trust the other person, suspending Proustian doubts. Such knowledge is not independent of evidence (...). But it goes beyond the evidence, and it ventures outside of the inner world.

³⁶ See especially Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, chapters 1-3; and *Upheavals*, chapter 9.

³⁷ Nussbaum, "Love's knowledge," in *Love's Knowledge*, 262-263.

³⁸ Nussbaum, "Love's knowledge," 265.

There is no grand conclusion in this essay. What is being argued is that knowledge of love is something other than intellectual grasping, while at the same time requiring that very grasping.³⁹ As Nussbaum also says, referring to Ann Beattie's short story "Learning to Love," knowledge of love "is 'kind of slow'; it unfolds, it evolves, in human time. It is not one thing at all, but a complex way of being with another person, a deliberate yielding to uncontrollable external influences. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions, and no certainty."⁴⁰

Nussbaum's remarks on love help to develop the sense that emotions are not mere imprints gathered from our surroundings, or mere feelings that are passively received. They lead to action. The fact that they are cognitive in nature means mostly that we form judgments about the world that are pre-linguistic, but that simultaneously shape our behavior. All this will be clearer when in the end of this chapter something is said about how Nussbaum thinks of anger. But for now, it might sound like too vague a description. A helpful resource to make more concrete Nussbaum's idea that emotions are cognitions is provided by Richard Sorabji in his *Emotions and Peace of Mind*. Sorabji is clear in explaining how the Stoics develop the four generic passions of distress, pleasure, fear, and appetite.⁴¹ He is also clear in explaining how different thinkers understood these passions differently, and what impact that had for the future of Stoicism. But although most of the book is focused on explaining what those four basic passions meant, and what emotional therapy mattered for in the Stoic tradition, the initial chapters provide a good discussion on

³⁹ Nussbaum, "Love's knowledge," 283.

⁴⁰ Nussbaum, "Love's knowledge," 281.

⁴¹ See Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Gifford Lectures, 1997 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially the beginning of chapter 2.

how the likes of Chrysippus, Seneca, Zeno, or Galen thought of the nature of the emotions.⁴²

Again, the gist of Sorabji's argument is that "from early on, philosophers thought of the emotions as cognitive."⁴³ Chrysippus will be the philosopher that presses this connection thoroughly. But even Plato shows signs of bringing together emotion and reason. In some of the early dialogues, "he puts in Socrates' mouth, and repeats later in the *Laws*, the idea that fear actually *is* a cognition: the expectation of impending evil."⁴⁴ Also Aristotle, despite not sharing the Stoic interest of removing emotions from the soul, makes the connection between emotion and cognition. As Sorabji writes, "Aristotle's accounts of emotion are shot through with cognitive terms, but they are not yet tidied in the way that the Stoics were later to tidy them."⁴⁵ The best example given is that in *On the Soul*, Aristotle's account of anger is "cognitive, because the idea of retaliation implies awareness of distress received and distress to be returned, but it describes only the form of anger."⁴⁶ There are therefore hints in Plato and in Aristotle of what will be developed by the mainstream Stoic project regarding the emotions. The epitome of the Stoic project comes when it is understood that "every emotion involves two distinctive value judgements. One is that there is good and bad (benefit and harm) at hand, the other that it is appropriate to react."⁴⁷ This quote probably makes it clear how close a connection there is between

⁴² Most of *Emotion and Peace of Mind* is dedicated to this subject. Part II focuses generally on the therapy of the emotions. Chapters 14-19, in particular, show how therapy was understood and undertaken. William Harris' *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), has a good introduction to emotional therapy as well in its chapter 1.

⁴³ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 19.

⁴⁴ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 20.

⁴⁵ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 22.

⁴⁶ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 25.

⁴⁷ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 29.

cognition and action. Emotions make these two judgements about what is good or bad, and about what the appropriate reaction is, in such a way that whenever an impulse or stimulus comes a suitable action may follow.⁴⁸

Sorabji's main contribution has to do with his description of how Stoic philosophy intends to be a kind of emotional therapy. This is an important point for the overall claim of this thesis – as anger, in the Stoic vocabulary, is something to be suppressed and not just controlled, as it would be in the Aristotelian tradition that the third chapter will advocate for. Arguing from a personal point of view, Sorabji says that

My interest in Stoic therapy, therefore, is in its ability to get rid of unwanted or counter-productive emotions, not of all. I do think emotions may be counter-productive far more often than it is recognized. But what I want to consider in this chapter is Chrysippus' much more radical thesis that nearly all of them should be eradicated (...). The case against eradication is not so obvious as one might take it to be at first.⁴⁹

This is a discussion with important consequences. There is, on the one hand, a faction that calls for the eradication of all emotion – as emotions are supposed to be judgements on whether things are good or bad, “whereas nothing is good or bad except character. The rest is indifferent.”⁵⁰ On the other hand, there are those who reject emotion because freedom from it can bring tranquility to one's life. Surprisingly, the advocates of tranquility do not

⁴⁸ It is difficult not to see in Sorabji's description of the emotions clear traces of Aristotle's practical syllogism. There might be scholarship on the topic, although I know of none. See also p. 44-45 on how Sorabji describes what the “standard view” on impulses is.

⁴⁹ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 181. Chapter 12 had already started this enquiry on the therapy of the emotions, but it is chapter 13 that sets the terms. This is a chapter worth reading in its entirety.

⁵⁰ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 182.

even distinguish between good emotions to be preserved and bad emotions to be suppressed:

their rationale is that pleasant and unpleasant emotions go together. You cannot hope for the pleasure of obtaining what you want without being liable to anxiety as to whether you will get it, depression if you do not, pride if you do, fear that you may lose it, possibly the experience of actual loss, even jealousy, anger, fear, or subservience.⁵¹

These two positions would be relatively mainstream all throughout Stoic thought. Sorabji does a good job at presenting a number of objections that these two ways of thinking about emotional therapy did not consider.⁵² But what is noteworthy, what is worth retaining, is the idea that for the Stoics emotions were – largely speaking – harmful in their consequences, even when spontaneous, and had therefore to be either repressed or thoroughly controlled. Contemporary discussions on the role and scope of the emotions, like Nussbaum's, have to deal with this problem. There is much to be said about their attempts.

These first pages pointed to two key aspects for the understanding of the emotions: that they are cognitive in nature, therefore embodying judgements that lead to action; and that in the Stoic imaginary emotions are something that require at least some kind of control, if not total suppression. This is the general framework under which discussions on anger should be placed. As an emotion, anger is cognitive in nature. And as an emotion, anger has to face the question whether it should or should not be controlled – or even repressed. But what has this framework meant over the centuries? More specifically, what has it meant in the early history of anger? David Konstan does a thorough job in responding

⁵¹ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 182.

⁵² Sorabji, *Emotion*, 185-193.

to these questions, providing in his *The Emotions of the Ancient Greek* chapters on anger, on envy and indignation, on hatred, or on grief. The fact that there are such close similarities between all these emotions is revealing of the rich complexity of the Greek world. It shows great attentiveness to the minutia of what happens within oneself: just like someone being able to distinguish between different though close shades of blue in the colour spectrum reveals good aesthetical awareness, being able to distinguish between different though close emotions like the ones mentioned above reveals good awareness of the passions. The Greeks seem to have this awareness, to talk about it, to insert it in their moral stories. In itself, this is something noteworthy.

Looking specifically at Konstan and at what he writes about anger, the first thing to notice is his esteem for Aristotle. Konstan starts his chapter by pointing out that anger seems to be a universal emotion, both in the classical and in the modern catalogues of the passions. But he warns the reader from the first paragraph that “there is reason to think that the ancient Greek concept is in fact significantly different from the modern.”⁵³ Aristotle is an appealing starting point because, Konstan says, he sees the emotions as natural – hence not attempting either to suppress them or to reduce them to any other thing. His definition of anger encompasses three elements: some kind of pain; which motivates a desire for revenge; motivated by slight.⁵⁴ Slight, indeed, is crucial. As Konstan says, we cannot get angry at stones but only at people who we know intended the lessening, or the belittlement, that constitutes slight.⁵⁵ And it is one of the elements that distinguishes the classical from

⁵³ David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 41.

⁵⁴ Konstan, *Ancient Greeks*, esp. 41-44.

⁵⁵ Konstan, *Ancient Greeks*, 45. Although a short definition of slight would be “the active belief that the other person is of no account” (55), Konstan always stresses that a defined social status has to exist so as to be violated. Slight is not just bemusement in Aristotle’s terms, but “a realizable desire for revenge; the unique

the modern conception of anger, as a defined social structure and hierarchy – like the one existing in Athens – is necessary for slight to be an operative concept in the formation of anger. So, given slight's importance, it has to be noted that in Aristotle's understanding anger is necessarily personal: it cannot be addressed towards a group, as a group cannot slight me. In here lies another difference between the ancient and the modern conception of anger.

Anger in Aristotle is then defined by the desire for revenge caused by the pain of being the object of slight. This is a good definition to focus on, as it will be highly influential for the future.⁵⁶ It is not about pain, although pain is involved, but it is about honor – or, even better, about being dishonored.⁵⁷ Pain is something that requires attention in itself, though. Because pain, or harm, can in the Greek terminology be the source not of anger understood as just mentioned, but of something that can rather be translated as indignation. The qualification there is that unjustified harm, or unfair mischief, are what bring about an indignation that is righteous. The pain is no longer related to the slight, or to belittlement, but to some kind of undeserved good fortune: the fortune of the person who is not entitled to what they have, or who is not due what they possess. Justice, and the justice vocabulary, are important here. Odysseus is presented by Konstan as the example of the man who displays righteous indignation: when he is blocked by the mendicant Irus to

stimulus to anger is a slight on the part of those not fit to slight one or one's own" (64). See also Harris, *Restraining*, 57, for an author with the same conclusions. Harris emphasizes more than Konstan that anger is an emotion that leads to action – and that this would be central for Aristotle.

⁵⁶ This influence, as was already seen in the end of the last section, was major, for instance, in saint Thomas Aquinas – who also takes the relation between anger and slight most seriously. Despite all its influence, this is nonetheless not the only attempt at understand and defining anger in the classical world. Konstan has interesting remarks on how writers like Homer, Theophrastus, or Seneca thought of it (55 and 65-69). The limitations of a thesis like this one preclude unfortunately a description of their definitions.

⁵⁷ Konstan, *Ancient Greeks*, 73.

enter his own house, when he is denied what would by justice be his, Odysseus displays indignation – curiously, without a slight, because the masked Odysseus could not be recognized by Irus and therefore not dishonored by him.⁵⁸ Tenuous as it may be for us, this difference between anger and indignation seems to an easily recognizable one for the Greek.

The overlapping of these two Greek emotions, anger and indignation, corresponds roughly to what our modern conception of anger is. That is something that will hopefully be clear in the end of this chapter, especially in the remarks made *a propos* Nussbaum. There is, however, an often-unaddressed problem with terminology. In his *Restraining Rage*, William Harris explains in detail how wide the Greek and Latin terminology was to describe emotions that came to be condensed and uniformly translated in English as anger. Especially in the Greek world, the variety is staggering: *menis*, *cholos*, *kotos*, *nemesis*, *orge*, or *thumos*, are all words that describe different emotions in Greek. All these words, however, loosely mean in English the same thing: anger. Some qualification can help distinguishing some of that anger.⁵⁹ *Menis*, for instance, refers to the wrath the gods – or a hero like Achilles – shows. It is a kind of irresistible wrath. *Kotos*, in its turn, is a kind of resentful anger. By and large, *nemesis* has to do with righteous indignation. And *orge*, although it became associated with the slight that Aristotle refers to, was initially a description of a certain propensity for violence. In his own words, what Harris “is not that the lexical abundance of Greek with respect to the angry emotions shows that they were irascible, but simply that they were aware of the variety of such emotions.”⁶⁰ The simplified

⁵⁸ Konstan, *Ancient Greeks*, 118-119.

⁵⁹ See Harris, *Restraining*, 51-54 for the terminological distinctions and translations. Harris’ footnotes offer a plethora of material that can be helpful for further reading.

⁶⁰ Harris, *Restraining*, 56.

vocabulary that modern languages have in what comes to anger is revealing not so much of a society that has undergone therapy of the angry emotions better than the Greeks. Rather, our contemporary simplified vocabulary only shows that there is less awareness of the emotions, less ability to distinguish them. The Greek pursuit for emotional therapy led them to a position where minutia could be identified when distinguishing emotions and traits of the same emotion.

The other issue where Harris is most relevant is in the way he helps clarify the relation between emotions and action. This section started by saying that the emotions have been described by Nussbaum – in a description shared by all the other authors here mentioned – as cognitive in nature. Emotions embody judgements about the word, it was said and repeated. Harris’ remarks on the issue are a good way to close this section. They bring the circle back to where it started. Saying that emotions – and in particular *orge*, the word that in general came to mean what we know as anger – are “as much dispositions to action as they are interior feelings,” Harris says that modern emotions might make it difficult to grasp the reach of Greek emotions because they are too mild.⁶¹ One can be “angry with a friend or colleague without actually wishing for revenge or punishment” – and this is a striking difference from the imaginary of the Greek world, one that would leave Homer, Aristotle, and the Stoics all in utmost surprise. Harris goes further and says that this propensity for action would be shared by the Latin writers as well. Drawing on Seneca’s works, Harris notes that “*ira* cannot be hidden.”⁶² Revealing anger, acting on it, is inevitable for the Latin writers as well. This connection between emotion and anger is

⁶¹ Harris, *Restraining*, 58.

⁶² Harris, *Restraining*, 65.

what seems to drive a good amount of the effort towards restraining emotions in the classical world.

A key contribution made by Harris lies in the study of how Aristotle disagreed with Plato regarding the reaction one should have towards anger.⁶³ Unlike Plato, who sought to suppress it altogether, Aristotle sees anger as the appropriate means in some circumstances. In that regard, anger is for Aristotle something that does not have to be moderate in situations that call for an immoderate anger. As Harris says, what matters in Aristotle's opinion

is not that one should avoid anger as such, and that one's character or temperament should somehow be situated half-way between irascibility and 'habitual absence of *orge*,' but that one should be angry with the right people for the right reasons – with people who have truly done one some injury – and also in the right manner and at the right moment and for the right length of time.

And in the paragraph immediately following, he adds that

achieving the mean requires one to meet these criteria; it does *not* mean experiencing a moderate amount of anger, for while moderate anger is sometimes appropriate, in some circumstances – according to Aristotle – the correct reaction to provocation would be vigorous and prolonged anger, in others mild irritation.⁶⁴

This way of thinking about anger, Harris says, disappeared soon after Aristotle died. The control, suppression, or repression of the passions, became the trend in Stoic thought. And this idea that anger could be the right means in some situations – henceforth opening the

⁶³ See Harris, *Restraining*, 92-93. The whole chapter 6 deals with philosophies of restraining rage and is relevant for this discussion on how emotions relate to action.

⁶⁴ Harris, *Restraining*, 94-95.

door to a very positive appreciation of what righteous anger could be – was forgotten for a long time. But as Harris shows, it is quite present in Aristotle: anger can be immoderate when the harm one is reacting to is immoderate, as long as it is expressed in the right manner and for the right length of time.⁶⁵

Emotions are cognitions; there is a close relation between cognition and action; emotional therapy plays a big part in the Stoic vocabulary, as tranquility is something to aim for; anger is from an early stage associated with slight; the complex Greek vocabulary to express emotions related to anger shows that anger in the classical world can be righteous, and that it can also be immoderate. All this was claimed along these pages, based on the contributions of Nussbaum, Sorabji, Konstan, and Harris. These four authors are major players in leading contemporary scholarship on the nature of the emotions, and of anger in particular. Their focus, though, is primarily on the Homeric, Aristotelic, and Stoic descriptions. What then of Christians?

Anger in the Scripture, anger in the Church

Looking to the classical world in search for enlightenment in topics related to the emotions in general and to anger in particular is a considerable endeavor. The same thing happens in what concerns the early Christian world: there is much to draw from, with the additional problem of having less scholarship done on the issue bringing some systematization to the material we possess. The Fathers of the Church wrote occasionally on anger and there is profit to draw from an analysis of a few of their texts. One should look also at some reliable biblical commentaries, which can help decoding the difficulties

⁶⁵ Harris has much to say about the way anger was understood in the classical world. Especially pp. 99-127 bring a good panoramic view of the relation different authors found between emotion and action.

brought to contemporary readers not proficient in the languages which formed the original texts. Both the Old and the New Testament see anger in ways that is pertinent exploring. These two steps will be undertaken in this section. There are, as will be shown, some similarities with the classical world. There are also some clear distinctions, and attention will be paid to that too.

A rough survey of some Scriptural passages showing the importance anger has for Christianity is a good starting point. Unfortunately, a comprehensive study on the presence of anger in the Scripture seems to be lacking. Still, a few passages are particularly important. Ephesians 4:26, which mirrors, Psalm 4:4, would be two examples. The adage “be angry, but do not sin” – in its many translations – is to be found here and some exegesis on these two key texts will be handy. Proverbs 24:17-18 bears some instructions on how to deal with a member of the community who is deserving of punishment. And, of course, there is the episode of Jesus driving the money lenders away from the temple in Mt 21:12-13. These are four texts of special significance, and for that reason they will be discussed here. But the Scripture is full of passages revealing the prominence of the language of anger. A brief survey of the New International Version shows almost thirty results for a word search of “be angry”; roughly the same number can be found if the word searched for is “rage”; six results can be found for “indignation”; and a staggering 180 entries are to be found if the search is for “wrath,” 54 of those referring to God’s wrath as “my wrath.”⁶⁶ Anger, wrath, rage, and indignation, are emotions ascribed both to God and to men. As broad and imprecise as a search like this one might be, it still shows that emotions consisting in or related to anger are not irrelevant for the Christian world.

⁶⁶ See <http://www.biblestudytools.com/>. This is not meant to be the most reliable piece of research, but just an indication of how extensive this language is.

Psalm 4 is in many ways the key passage to examine, being sometimes read as a call for a return to “disciplined faith,” or to “submissive silence.”⁶⁷ The idea is that he who is injured is called to trust God. So, in his translation, Walter Brueggemann translates the verse as “when you are disturbed, do not sin” – meaning that only YHWH can act to restore righteousness.⁶⁸ There are all sorts of audacious interpretations of the verses. Hans-Joachim Kraus, for instance, puts vv. 4-5 in the lips of the persecuted, who would be telling the persecutors to “be angry on your beds – but be silent!”⁶⁹ Kraus is often provocative in his writings. Here, he would be saying that the command “be angry but be silent” would be a way to warn the persecutors “against transgression (before Yahweh).”⁷⁰ Along the same lines, Allen Ross sees Psalm 4 as coming from the one who is being persecuted, and addressed towards the persecutors: “tremble, but do not sin” – meaning that whatever enmity exists between two people, it should be stopped by sober reflection before it materializes.⁷¹ Commentaries like these do not seem to be endorsing anger in any way. The similarities with Stoic therapy are quite noticeable.

The reality of the interpretation of the verse is however a bit more complex than what contemporary scholarship tends to make of it. In the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, verse 4 is translated precisely as the tradition would have it: “be angry, but

⁶⁷ See Walter Brueggemann and William Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 41.

⁶⁸ Brueggemann, *Psalms*, 40.

⁶⁹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988), 144. This is a controversial psalm in its interpretation. The simple fact that agreement is difficult to reach even in this simple question of who says verse 4 and who listens to it is revealing of this controversy.

⁷⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 148.

⁷¹ Allen Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 236-238.

sin not.”⁷² Anger is not dismissed as easily by the Fathers. The summary the editors give of the writings of the Fathers on the topic is a delight:

we should examine ourselves regarding anger (Theodore of Mopsuestia), recognizing that the providence of God is often beyond our understanding (Diodore) and even when anger seems justified, moderation is just and beneficial for human society (Lactantius). Those in ruling positions should especially take note (Ambrose). There is a right and a wrong anger (Chrysostom), and there are two ways to understand the psalmist’s injunction: do not sin in your anger at others, but also, turn your anger against your own sin and repent (Augustine, Cassiodorus). We need to keep our mouths shut (Ambrose), recognizing the better wisdom (Ambrose), the Christian response of ending anger completely (Jerome).⁷³

There is no all-out defense of anger as such. Lack of moderation is criticized, as is any kind of anger that would be altogether unjustified. But there is some openness to a right, moderate, appropriate anger. More will be said about this in regard to Saint Basil and Lactantius. For now, all that matters pointing out is that in the history of the interpretation of Psalm 4 anger was not always altogether dismissed.

Commentaries on Ephesians 4:26 seem to be in general a bit bolder in their claims than most commentaries on Psalm 4:4. Harold Hoehner translates the first part of the verse as “be angry and do not sin.”⁷⁴ Hoehner claims that derivatives of the Greek *orgizo/orgizomai* can be found seventy-nine times in the LXX, and derivatives of *amartia/amartano* can be found some 263 times all together.⁷⁵ The claim is basically that these are

⁷² Craig Blaising and Carmen Hardin, *Psalms 1-50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 24.

⁷³ Blaising and Hardin, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 25. This is a precious commentary. Lengthier references to all the Fathers mentioned are offered in the text – usually referring to letters or to sermons.

⁷⁴ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 618.

⁷⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 619.

not two rare terms, and that their confluence in this passage is meaningful. Furthermore, Hoehner rejects the view that this is an imperative commanding one not to sin when in anger. Anger, he says, is not intrinsically sinful: one who is wronged is correct in being angry – but not in being consumed by that anger.⁷⁶ Frank Thielman shares this interpretation, although suggesting that in Paul’s view anger is never to be normalized. In his words, Paul “forbids his readers from allowing anger to fester.”⁷⁷ The question would be mostly about not allowing for anger to gain roots and to become bitter. All things considered, the commentators on the letter to the Ephesians display a relatively high tolerance to anger and on occasion even describe it unequivocally as good.⁷⁸

Something slightly different happens in the commentaries on Proverbs 24:17-18 – translated by Tremper Longman III as “When your enemies fall, don’t rejoice. | When he stumbles, don’t let your heart be glad. | Otherwise, YHWH will see, and it will be evil in his eyes, | and he will turn his anger from him.”⁷⁹ Following Egyptian wisdom instructions, the book of Proverbs teaches that anger in the sense of impetuosity is not a good thing. The wise person should be “cool” (a common Egyptian idiom for being wise, anticipating the English slang by millennia), because only fools lose their composure and act like fools. Anger and foolishness are both betrayed by the impetuosity they display. But God’s wrath is something very different; it is not a model for human imitating. God’s wrath

⁷⁶ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 621.

⁷⁷ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 313.

⁷⁸ Although this is not meant to refocus the conversation on saint Thomas Aquinas, see his *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, Aquinas Scripture Series, v. 2 (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1966), 184-185.

⁷⁹ Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 439.

punishes people for bad behavior and so is a good thing. God's wrath is also beyond human judging. The excerpt from Proverbs 24:17-18 strongly advises keeping clear of God's exacting judgment. So, in a nutshell, the advice for the wise person would be to stand back and let things happen.⁸⁰ As Richard Clifford writes in his commentary on Proverbs, "one should leave in God's hands the punishment of evil."⁸¹ But what the verses seem to suggest, as Andrew Steinmann points out, is that gladness or gloating is not to be shown when one's enemy is about to face God's anger, because that gladness or gloating would put God off.⁸² Arrogance, or finding gladness in presuming that God will angrily punish one's enemy, appears to have the effect of making God question whether His anger is being well directed. This is a curious element of these verses, and one often overlooked.

There is plenty to say about anger in the person of Jesus too. Although Jesus does not comment the "be angry, but do not sin" verse of Psalm 4, there is no shortage of occasions when Jesus displays emotions that would fit the anger vocabulary. The most evident one, and also the most commented one, is of course the episode of the driving out of the money lenders from the temple. The Gospel of Matthew dedicates only two verses to it:

And Jesus entered the temple area and drove out those who were selling and buying in the temple area, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those

⁸⁰ This paragraph is almost literally a copy and paste of an email exchanged with Richard Clifford about the issue of anger in the Old Testament. Clifford concluded his email by saying that "I think Ephesians 4:26 is simply an interesting way to say that we should not let our anger get to the point where we do our neighbor an injustice." Again, his view is that not all anger is a problem – but only the anger that leads to cause an injustice to our neighbor. Saint Thomas Aquinas would have shared the same position.

⁸¹ Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 215.

⁸² Andrew Steinmann, *Proverbs*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2009), 481. See also Longman, *Proverbs*, 440.

selling doves. And he said to them: “It is written: ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of bandits’.”

Matthew’s narrative is an edit of Mark’s original text, where the entrance in Jerusalem and the episode in the temple constitute two distinct episodes. Matthew gives the reader the sense that the peaceful entrance into the city and the cleansing of the temple follow each other – and are therefore not explainable by different moods that Jesus would have on different days, but are rather in their own way the fulfilment of what the Scripture had predicted (in the cleansing of the temple, combining Is 56:7 and Jer 7:11).⁸³ Jesus is the peaceful King who enters Jerusalem, and with no contradiction He is also the one who cleanses the temple.

The Gospel of John, though, tells a slightly different story. Not only does this episode happen in the beginning of the Gospel, not as confirmation of who Jesus is but as an announcement of what He will do, but it also shows a more radical version of Jesus. It says that

In the Temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and the oxen, out of the Temple; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

The disciples conclude remembering that Jesus is consumed by zeal for the Temple, just like the Scripture said. Jesus makes a whip – and He uses it. Again, there is continuity between the peaceful entrance in Jerusalem and the force used in the temple. And although in John Jesus uses “more” force, the motive is the same: not letting the temple become

⁸³ Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 293-295.

what it is not. The concern is with not perverting what the temple is, especially because the perversion of the money lenders and animal sellers is one that affects the poor the most. Jesus uses force to protect the innocent, one could say. And all this out of zeal, but without sin. “Be zealous, and *therefore* sin not”?

Two other traits of Jesus are noteworthy for a thesis like this one. One is the explicit anger shown in Mark 3:5. For only one of two times in the Gospel of Mark, Dan Harrington and John Donahue say, Jesus can be seen displaying *orge-anger*. After having cured a man with a withered hand, on the Sabbath, in the Synagogue, and after having questioned the Pharisees about whether it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, the reader is told that “in anger he looked around at all of them, and was deeply grieved at the hardness of their hearts.”⁸⁴ The duo “*in anger... deeply grieved (...)* discloses strong emotion on Jesus’ part. ‘Anger’ (*orge*) (...) is virtually synonymous with ‘wrath’.”⁸⁵ Harrington goes on to say that this is the most bitter and the most serious of all the five controversies Jesus has while in Galilee.⁸⁶ He also says that both Matthew (12:12) and Luke (6:10) omit this mention of Jesus’ anger and grief. The edit in the versions of Matthew and Luke is a curious one: there is an attempt to de-radicalize Jesus, so it seems. But just like in the episode of the temple, it would *probably* not be too far-stretched to affirm that Jesus is motivated in his anger out of some kind of zeal. The “doing good” which Jesus asks the Pharisees about whether it is lawful on the Sabbath appears to resemble the zeal language quite strongly.

A broader emotional trait of Jesus worth pursuing is His weeping. The verb is used often in the Gospels – perhaps the most famous occasions being Peter weeping after

⁸⁴ John Donahue and Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 114.

⁸⁵ Donahue, *Mark*, 116.

⁸⁶ Donahue, *Mark*, 117.

denying Jesus (e.g. Mt 26:75), and Jesus proclaiming blessed those who weep, for they will laugh (Lk 6:21). But there are two other occasions where Jesus Himself cries: when His friend Lazarus dies, the text reading succinctly “Jesus wept” (Jo 11:35); and, also strikingly, when He approaches Jerusalem – and, seeing it, weeps (Lk 19:41-44). Although it could be argued that Jesus weeps for different reasons (out of friendship and out of sorrow), there are two important notes to draw from here.

Firstly, the fact that Jesus is “immoderate” in His emotions. Unlike the Stoic ideal that sees emotions as in need of therapy, of suppression, or at least of some sort of control, Jesus weeps – so noticeably that Luke and John thought it would be relevant to put it in writing. There seems to be no emotional flatness in Jesus, or no need for constant moderation of one’s emotions: Jesus’ emotions can be displayed in quite radical fashion. Actually, as the examples offered show, there are even occasions when displaying those emotions unreservedly and publicly seems to be the thing to do. Secondly, even if Jesus’ weeping has different motives, a case can be made to vouch for the affirmation that disappointment in the reception of His message was of special importance. Looking at Lk 13:34-35, where Jesus voices frustration at the Jerusalem that kills the prophets and stones those sent to it, is confirmation of this disappointment. But if this is correct, then once again a link can be made between Jesus’ zeal and His action. Jesus weeps immoderately out of zeal. Jesus is angry at the Pharisees, out of zeal, and with no sin. And Jesus, out of zeal, uses force in the temple – again, with no sin. This is a vocabulary that can have more consequences to Christian ethics than what it usually is given credit for. The third chapter will build heavily on this portrait of Jesus.

The language of the Scripture resounded in different ways in the Fathers.⁸⁷ As mentioned, the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* shows that the Fathers are not altogether opposed to a positive understanding of the role anger plays in Christian life. There are some more opposed to it, or more in favor of some strong kind of anger restraint.⁸⁸ Still, St. Basil the Great, Lactantius, or Origen, are often seen as examples of writers who look sympathetically at anger. In his homily *Against those who are prone to anger*, St. Basil starts by warning against those who, because of their short temper, “have no respect for old age, nor for a virtuous life, nor ties of kinship, nor favors received in the past, nor for anything else worthy of honor. Anger is a kind of temporary madness.”⁸⁹ The question is mostly one of rashness: anger and rashness seem to walk hand-in-hand, hence calling the Christian to contrive in whatever way so as to avoid reacting to anger with anger. “Has someone abused you? Bless him” – a solution invoking the “coolness” that Richard Clifford mentioned *a propos* the Egyptian way to think of the wise man.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ A particularly helpful introduction to the theme is Samuel Powel, *The Impassioned Life: Reason and Emotion in the Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016). Powel has two particularly good chapters on the early Fathers, and on Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. In the chapter on the Fathers, Powel discusses, for instance, the writings of Saint Benedict, Saint Anthony, or Origen on the subject. It is easy to read and well documented.

⁸⁸ Cfr. Harris, *Restraining*, chapter 16. Harris offers a good overview of the early Christian authors who wrote on anger, and his claim is that most Christian authors would see God’s anger as something acceptable, but not human anger. There are exceptions to this, most noticeably St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom, but the rule would be the search for some kind of restraint when facing anger. Still, it must be noted that even in Harris’ account there is no such thing as a universal apology to erase or completely obliterate the role anger plays in the life of the Christian. The fact that Jesus displays anger – however one chooses to interpret the meaning of that anger – is the main reason for this.

⁸⁹ Saint Basil the Great, “Homily Against Those Who Are Prone to Anger,” in *Ascetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church, volume 9, translated by Sister Monica Wagner (Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 447-62 (448).

⁹⁰ Saint Basil, “Against Those,” 451.

Most of Basil's homily seems to be an attempt to provide encouragement to a community that was likely facing some kind of inner conflict. There is constant mention to how the Lord Himself was also struck in the face, spat on, insulted – and nonetheless, remained calm and self-controlled. A lot of what is said is about preserving peace, in an effort that would not be alien later on to Saint Augustine. That said, St. Basil does not advocate only for passivity in the face of sin. As he comes to say, “anger frequently ministers to good actions.”⁹¹ Also, there is such a thing as a “just anger.” In a clarifying paragraph, St. Basil writes that

anger, aroused at the proper time and in the proper manner, produces courage, endurance, and contingency; acting contrary to right reason, however, it becomes madness. The Psalmist admonishes us: “Be ye angry and sin not.” The Lord, moreover, threatens with condemnation one who lightly gives way to anger, but He does not forbid that anger be directed against its proper objects, as a medicinal device, so to speak.⁹²

St. Basil's motives become clearer here. He admonishes not against those who are properly angry, but against those who are angry at their brethren without proper purpose, or, in other words, for trivial reasons – slight being an example of this provocation that leads to improper anger.⁹³ Anger has to do with a grievance that seeks to restore the balance of those who wronged us. And, even if humility and meekness can be helpful for one not to give way to improper anger, fueled by trivial reasons, the fact remains that anger can be just whenever it is used as a weapon against idolatry, for instance.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Saint Basil, “Against Those,” 458.

⁹² Saint Basil, “Against Those,” 457-8.

⁹³ Saint Basil, “Against Those,” 459.

⁹⁴ Saint Basil, “Against Those,” 458-9.

Although St. Basil does not expand much on why idolatry is a reason for anger to be just, there is a possible link between his reasoning and the idea previously advanced that in the Scriptural tradition a relation exists between anger and zeal. Just anger, anger aimed at idolatry, is likely motivated by zeal – or in the very least, contains traces of some kind of zeal. A somehow similar thing happens with Lactantius, who in *On the Anger of God* offers good insight into how an even earlier author than St. Basil would look at anger. Lactantius is concerned with the anger of God, and only obliquely with human anger. Yet, this is what he writes towards the end of his treatise on God’s anger:

the anger of man ought to be curbed, because he is often angry unjustly; and he has immediate emotion, because he is only for a time. Therefore, lest those things should be done which the low, and those of moderate station, and great kings do in their anger, his rage ought to have been moderated and suppressed, lest, being out of his mind, he should commit some inexpiable crime. But God is not angry for a short time, because He is eternal and of perfect virtue, and He is never angry unless deservedly. But, however, the matter is not so; for if He should altogether prohibit anger, He Himself would have been in some measure the censurer of His own workmanship, since He from the beginning had inserted anger in the liver of man, since it is believed that the cause of this emotion is contained in the moisture of the gall.

The paragraph develops in a strange way. Lactantius seems to be writing against anger, calling for its elimination. However, it changes abruptly: God cannot prohibit anger, because anger is a part of the created humanity – and God is a perfect workman.⁹⁵ Anger

⁹⁵ Richard Sorabji has relevant remarks to make on this point. He briefly mentions Lactantius’ rejection of the Stoic project of the suppression of the emotions (Sorabji, *Emotions*, 397), arguing also that “the eradication of emotion would remove all motivation” (185). Note that Sorabji reads the Lactantius of the *Divine Institutes* more than the one of the *On the Anger of God*.

has to have a positive explanation, even though it does not look like that at a first glance.

So, the paragraph continues:

Therefore He does not altogether prohibit anger, because that affection is necessarily given, but He forbids us to persevere in anger. For the anger of mortals ought to be mortal; for if it is lasting, enmity is strengthened to lasting destruction. Then, again, when He enjoined us to be angry, and yet not to sin, it is plain that He did not tear up anger by the roots, but restrained it, that in every correction we might preserve moderation and justice. Therefore He who commands us to be angry is manifestly Himself angry; He who enjoins us to be quickly appeased is manifestly Himself easy to be appeased: for He has enjoined those things which are just and useful for the interests of society.⁹⁶

Lactantius, just like Basil, opposes a wrong kind of anger – in his case, an anger that is perpetual. Human anger can only have human, or passing, anger. Especially in chapter 16-18, Lactantius associates this anger with the need to restore justice. The justification for anger is not quite some sort of slight in the way of Aristotle, but it is more an issue of correction. And for this reason, as Sorabji points out, for Lactantius anger is not always connected to revenge, and it does not always require action: sometimes, anger is its own action.⁹⁷ That is a rare occurrence, but a possible one. Still, as a rule of thumb, anger is – just as in St. Basil – related to some sort of sin, calling for restoration, giving anger a temporary role in the overall schema of a Christian's life.

This section dug into the foundations of Christian anger. What it purported to do, even if too briefly, was showing that there are grounds for a positive appreciation of anger

⁹⁶ Lucius Lactantius, *On the Anger of God*, in *New Advent*, accessed 4th March 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0703.htm>, chapter 21.

⁹⁷ Sorabji, *Emotions*, 138.

in the Scripture – possibly, even if tentatively, based on a connection between anger and zeal. Early Christian writers like St. Basil or Lactantius also seem to have some appreciation of anger that differs from the more radical versions of the Stoic project which attempted broadly either to eliminate anger, or at least to correct it, from the life of moral individuals.⁹⁸ A word must now be said on some contemporary takes on the issue.

A contemporary take on anger – with a Christian flavor

By and large, the mainstream Christian understanding of anger was never really the one just presented in the last section, drawing on those Scriptural passages and on those writings of the Fathers. Rather, the mainstream Christian understanding of anger seems to have always had much more in common with the Thomistic conception, greatly indebted to Aristotle. But this position, as it was already hinted, carries a danger within it – a danger that arises from the Thomistic position on anger and its connection to temperance. Because of his conception of anger as standing under the virtue of temperance, as it was shown in the first chapter, Aquinas was not able to see how much anger was in fact related to justice and to charity. But this later connection is something that in the Scripture can be seen often: the prophets do display anger on behalf of God’s justice (Amos, of course, is unparalleled in this regard). Or, to put it otherwise, injustice towards God and God’s people often sparks the anger of the prophets. The connection between anger and temperance, and the subsequent muting of the connection between anger and justice and charity, is one of the

⁹⁸ A text not explored in these pages but worth mentioning is Brian Dunkle’s “John Chrysostom’s Community of Anger Management,” in *Studia Patristica*, 2016 (forthcoming). Dunkle focuses on the different approaches Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom have to anger management, and suggests that while for Gregory anger is altogether an ugly emotion to restrain, for Chrysostom it can in certain circumstances be a righteous emotion when aimed at the correction of the Church. Dunkle’s bibliography on ancient literature is very much worth consulting.

ironies that a Thomistic-inspired account of force will have to deal with. It is ironic that Augustine and Aquinas, two of the crucial Christian authors for the development of Just War theory, seem not to have built their arguments primarily based on the Scriptural text – a place where they would have noticed, as it was pointed out, that anger plays an important role in its connection with force. Just War theories will inevitably have to cope with this issue. The flaws that have been imputed to Just War theory come from this association between temperance and anger, an association which does not make Scriptural sense. This point will be explored in a number of ways in the remainder of this thesis.

What is left to do in this chapter is showing what is being said about anger in modern academy. There are both Christian and non-Christian approaches to the theme and both will be paid attention here. Starting, then, with the Christian approaches, two names warrant special attention.⁹⁹ Both William Mattison and Michael Jaycox wrote doctoral dissertations on subjects dealing with Christian anger. And although the argument of this thesis, formulated in the next chapter, will part ways from these two young scholars, there are praises to be sung of their achievements. William Mattison's study is more historical than speculative: out of roughly four-hundred pages, only the final thirty are dedicated to building a new understanding of Christian anger. For that reason, it can be slightly unfulfilling as little is delivered in terms of argument. Nonetheless, Mattison has merits. Even if uninventive, the idea that "anger is a desire to rectify a perceived injustice" is a

⁹⁹ There has been some interest from Christian scholars besides the two that will be discussed. Of great interest are Servais Pinckaers, *Passions & Virtue* (Washington: CUA, 2015), esp. chapter 10; John Milhaven, *Good Anger* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1989); Diana Fritz Cates, "Taking Women's Experience Seriously: Thomas Aquinas and Audre Lorde on Anger," in *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996), edited by Simon Harak pp. 47-88; and Bryan Massingale, "Black Catholic Theology: Anger for the Sake of Justice," in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 51 (1996), 263-65.

good definition for what the Thomistic tradition has perceived.¹⁰⁰ And the idea that the object of anger is not injustice *per se*, but rather the perceived injustice that one wants to rectify, is interesting as well – as it rightly sees anger as an emotion that is cognitive in nature, i.e., that in itself leads to action. In the end, Mattison will say that his question is about whether anger is a moral phenomenon that can be seen as praiseworthy or blameworthy – and that is what the last pages of his dissertation end up discussing, in a way that bluntly speaking is largely inconsequential.¹⁰¹ What matters most of all in Mattison’s work is the Thomistic account of anger that is offered. Two notes on that are relevant.

The first is a further word on anger’s object. From a Thomistic viewpoint, Mattison says, anger always involves a desire for the rectification of an injustice; and it also involves some kind of sorrow for the harm suffered, or for the person inflicting suffering. Injury suffered and desirable punishment go hand in hand.¹⁰² Whenever these two elements constitute the object of anger, then anger can be said to have gathered the requisites to be virtuous.¹⁰³ But because these two elements are necessary for anger to be virtuous, it seems as if in a Thomistic account anger “makes sense only towards those with whom there is a relationship of justice.”¹⁰⁴ This is a key step in Mattison’s argument. Anger cannot be addressed towards horses or houses, at the wind or at a flood. It can also not be addressed towards a ruler of a foreign country, one could add, because in that case there is no relationship of justice established where one can look for the rectification of an injustice

¹⁰⁰ William Mattison, “Christian Anger?: A Contemporary Account of Virtuous Anger in the Thomistic Tradition,” (PhD. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2002), 381.

¹⁰¹ Mattison, *Christian Anger?*, 147ss.

¹⁰² Mattison, *Christian Anger?*, 185-189.

¹⁰³ Mattison, *Christian Anger?*, 288.

¹⁰⁴ Mattison, *Christian Anger?*, 190.

which has brought me harm. Mattison accepts this reading quite uncritically – in a way that is problematic and that encapsulates the Thomistic account’s most serious flaw.

The second note on Mattison deals with the distinction established between anger and hatred. Considerable attention is dedicated to this.¹⁰⁵ The distinction is based on why punishment is desired towards someone who has inflicted someone else some harm: if the punishment is desired for the sake of correction, or to restore the proper order of things, then the emotion expressed is anger; if punishment is desired for its own sake, without any relation to just punishment, then hatred is the emotion present in one’s intention. Hatred desires evil for evil sake, while anger desires evil for the sake of justice.¹⁰⁶ Once again, Mattison goes to pains to develop the connection between anger and justice, justifying it through a close reading of Thomas’ theory of the passions. Mattison’s intention is to prove that there can be such a thing as a good, or virtuous anger. What is difficult to know is what does it add to what Aquinas had written almost eight centuries earlier.

Michael Jaycox, as mentioned, also has a good deal to say on the issue. Like Mattison, Jaycox is highly indebted to Aquinas. But unlike Mattison, Jaycox is able to ask what such an understanding of anger matters for.¹⁰⁷ In a nutshell, Jaycox sees social anger as a response to injustice. There is a constant reminder that this anger must not be

¹⁰⁵ See Mattison, “Christian Anger?”, 239-247. The whole section is dedicated to this. But most of the conclusion is dedicated to the same distinction – focusing there on the importance that intention and end have for anger and hatred to be distinguished. See for instance 401-402.

¹⁰⁶ Mattison, *Christian Anger?*, 240 ss.

¹⁰⁷ Regarding Mattison, Jaycox says that his work is “an ahistorical and insufficiently critical project retrieval [of Aquinas] bolstered by scientific proof-texting.” See Michael Jaycox, “Righteous Anger and Virtue Ethics: A Contemporary Reconstruction of Anger in Service to Justice” (PhD. diss., Boston College, 2014). The criticism seems to hold, even if Mattison is due credit for his attempt to understand anger in light of virtue ethics. Being uninventive in its reading of Aquinas should not count against Mattison.

immoderate if it wants to be Christian.¹⁰⁸ And there is a constant reminder too that a status quo not corresponding to the way human beings are meant to live under is what constitutes the moral content of social anger.¹⁰⁹ Jaycox achieves more than Mattison primarily because he wants to see what social anger can do for a society looking for justice. His work is practical. Two notes on what this means can be offered here.

Just like Saint Thomas Aquinas, Jaycox sees slight as being harmful and causing social anger. Nonetheless, there is a corrective to Aquinas' work that must be done: while a slight can be a source of social anger, it does not exhaust all the possible reasons why social anger can be justified. In his argument, because anger is too closely connected to slight,

Aquinas' analysis of anger never quite 'makes it' to the sociopolitical level (...). Aquinas' model is incapable of accommodating collective expressions of social anger, anger directed at social class, anger felt toward unaddressed systemic injustices, anger directed at particular political regimes.¹¹⁰

Jaycox's work is not quite a rejection of Aquinas, but more of a corrective. Anger is still related to injustice – but to social injustice in the first place, hence giving “the oppressed” a vehicle to seek restoration. This is a most significant move.

This leads to the second note to be made. Jaycox achieves more than Mattison not just because his notion of anger has departed from the narrow view of slight as the main object of anger, but it achieves more because it is inherently practical. Jaycox describes

¹⁰⁸ Jaycox, “Righteous Anger,” 3 and 23. Both the lack of moderation in expressing anger and the lack of anger expressed in an adequate and timely way are criticized by Jaycox.

¹⁰⁹ Jaycox, “Righteous Anger.” 5.

¹¹⁰ Jaycox, “Righteous Anger,” 19.

anger as a “constructive emotion,” and one that motivates political action.¹¹¹ This is perhaps the most important point in Jaycox’s work. There is an obvious attempt to have anger being the prime, or the direct, justifier for a Christian use of force. The social anger born out of the injustice seen in the course of social life can by itself call for a kind of change that involves protest, demonstration, or even action.¹¹²

Finally, a word on Martha Nussbaum. Her most recent book, published in 2016, is titled *Anger and Forgiveness*. This chapter started by looking at how Nussbaum thought of the emotions, showing that her influence in contemporary academy is widespread. Hers is an unavoidable name whenever one wants to engage with Stoic passions, with self-restraint, and also specifically with anger. Because anger has been a permanent concern for Nussbaum over the years: both as a case study and as the object itself of her study, there was no shortage of attention dedicated to anger by Nussbaum in her writings. The next chapter will argue that Nussbaum’s understanding of anger is so dated that it becomes erroneous – a word used carefully, as great thinkers are to be criticized with humility. Still, even if erroneous, her position embodies what is perhaps the dominant way of thinking about anger: a harmful passion, related to justice, but ultimately dispensable.

Nussbaum understands and accepts Aristotle’s definition of anger – which, as was mentioned already, is linked with slight and with the desire to exact revenge on that same

¹¹¹ Jaycox, *Righteous Anger*, 212 and 214.

¹¹² Jaycox’s first examples in the very opening of his dissertation are the ANC resistance to the Apartheid, or the peasant action leading to the Fall of the Bastille. Regardless of whether those are good examples or not, the point stands: Christian anger as he understands it motivates action.

slight.¹¹³ Nonetheless, she begs to differ in a central regard. As Nussbaum writes in an article that captures well the essence of *Anger and Forgiveness*,

the payback idea does not make sense. Whatever the wrongful act was – a murder, a rape, a betrayal – inflicting pain on the wrongdoer does not help restore the thing that was lost. We think about payback all the time, and it is a deeply human tendency to think that proportionality between punishment and offence somehow makes good the offence. Only it doesn't. Let's say my friend has been raped. I urgently want the offender to be arrested, convicted, and punished. But really, what good will that do? Looking to the future, I might want many things: to restore my friend's life, to prevent and deter future rapes. But harsh treatment of this particular wrongdoer might or might not achieve the latter goal. It's an empirical matter. And usually people do not treat it as an empirical matter: they are in the grip of an idea of cosmic fitness that makes them think that blood for blood, pain for pain is the right way to go. The payback idea is deeply human, but fatally flawed as a way of making sense of the world.

Although Nussbaum is quite critical of the existence of anger as such, the criticism here goes towards the desire for retaliation which feeds on resentment.¹¹⁴ Therefore, Nussbaum writes a couple of paragraphs later that

A wronged person who is really angry, seeking to strike back, soon arrives, I claim, at a fork in the road. Three paths lie before her. Path one: she goes down the path of status-focus, seeing the event as all about her and her rank. In this case her payback project makes sense, but her normative focus is self-centred and objectionably narrow. Path two:

¹¹³ In *Anger and Forgiveness*, Nussbaum says that anger is not so much about the wrong done to someone, but rather about the desire to make the wrongdoer suffer something (5). This will be developed in detail in her chapter 2.

¹¹⁴ For Nussbaum's criticism of anger, see her chapters 4-7 in *Anger and Forgiveness*. The idea is always that anger is in some way inappropriate and should not just be blindly accepted as an inevitable phenomenon in human life.

she focuses on the original offence (rape, murder, etc), and seeks payback, imagining that the offender's suffering would actually make things better. In this case, her normative focus is on the right things, but her thinking doesn't make sense. Path three: if she is rational, after exploring and rejecting these two roads, she will notice that a third path is open to her, which is the best of all: she can turn to the future and focus on doing whatever would make sense, in the situation, and be really helpful. This may well include the punishment of the wrongdoer, but in a spirit that is deterrent rather than retaliatory.¹¹⁵

All in all, Nussbaum's understanding of anger is helpful. Particularly, it is helpful for one to realize what the dangers of retaliation born out of resentment are. For that reason, her many remarks on how joy, humor, and generosity are to be seen as the antidotes for anger, are particularly interesting.¹¹⁶ Nussbaum rejects that anger is necessary to combat injustice, arguing instead that some sort of revolutionary love – particularly inspired by the life of Nelson Mandela, or Martin Luther King Jr., or Mahatma Gandhi – is what achieves a lasting justice.¹¹⁷ The name for this revolutionary love is *unconditional love and generosity*, which “gets ahead of forgiveness and prevents its procedural thoughts from taking shape.”¹¹⁸ This unconditional love and generosity, Nussbaum says, is ultimately where reconciliation will come from.

¹¹⁵ Nussbaum, “Beyond Anger,” in *Aeon*, July 2016, accessed 4th March 2017, <https://aeon.co/essays/there-s-no-emotion-we-ought-to-think-harder-about-than-anger>. These two paragraphs constitute also the core of the introduction of *Anger and Forgiveness*. Nussbaum says that they constitute the core of her argument (*Anger and Forgiveness*, 6).

¹¹⁶ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, 9 and 11.

¹¹⁷ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, chapter 8. This is an insight that plays well with Nussbaum's methodological claims in *Love's Knowledge*, where a close connection is drawn between literature and philosophy. See especially the introduction to *Love's Knowledge*, pp. 3-10 (with a neat summary in p.7).

¹¹⁸ Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, 13.

Summing up

In the introduction to this chapter, it was said that the goal was to do some kind of archeology of anger. That is what was aimed for in the last three sections: going over the works of Nussbaum, Sorabji, Konstan, and Harris provided the vocabulary for a general theory of the emotions, with some minor remarks on anger which revealed how ambiguous a term it is; then, looking at the Scripture and at the “be angry, but sin not” tradition showed how in the Scripture anger is not always dismissed altogether, but can even have a positive role to play related to zeal – something evident also in some of the Church Fathers; and finally, some contemporary takes on anger were discussed, with special emphasis on the attempts of William Mattison and Michael Jaycox to restore a positive view of an anger that is righteous. Everything that was done up until now aimed at showing that anger, unlike Just War theory, is a tradition that has Scriptural warrant; that can be employed proactively; and that aims at protecting the innocent who face harm. In addition, as it was shown in this chapter, anger understood in a Christian way has strong philosophical foundations that resonate with the view that anger is about more than only slight. For all these reasons, anger seems to be a much stronger tool to think about how and when force can be employed than Just War. A lot of work still needs to be done, but this is the argument in the making.

As for the next step of this thesis, what can be said from the outset is that it is the contentious one, but also the interesting one. Building on the discussion on the state of the art that was raised over the last two chapters, it will be claimed that both the way Christians generally think of force and the way Christians think of anger is misdirected. There should be a close connection between the two. But for that to be possible, a new way of understanding Christian anger and of its relation to force has to come to existence.

CHAPTER THREE

ON CHRISTIANITY AND ANGER

From righteous force to righteous anger: a Christian position

Most of what was written so far intended only to build a framework from within which to elaborate an argument towards a new understanding of Christian anger. As mentioned, a new understanding of Christian anger can have an impact on the way Christianity thinks about force – hence the starting point of this thesis being a modest criticism of Christianity’s mainstream justification for the use of force. But also as mentioned, this thesis is not meant to be only a literature review. The goal is to offer an argument, and not just a description, that might help rethinking the practices of the Church when faced with the need to employ or not to employ force. Even though this is not a thesis on Just War theory, nor a correction of the Thomistic conceptualization of anger, these pages will hopefully show how a new understanding of anger can challenge those widely accepted views both on force and on anger.

There are six steps to be developed over the next pages. Firstly, it will be important to offer a synthetic view of what is it that the current Christian conceptions of anger and of force do not answer. Some of that was already hinted at earlier on. But revisiting some of the reasons for why there should be a dissatisfaction about the way anger and force are understood is the basis for what will follow. Secondly, there is much to be said about how Christianity can profit from the theory of the emotions espoused by the likes of Nussbaum and the other scholars studied in the previous chapter. A theory of the emotions that sees emotions as cognitive in nature can help resituate the question of anger from an explicitly biblical point of view. Thirdly, something must be said about what Christian anger really is. This is the question that deals with the object of anger, which – as it will be argued – must depart from the traditional Thomistic formulation. This is the crucial step in the discussion being offered. In the fourth place, some explorations can be made to discover

what anger can do for Christianity if perceived in the way suggested in the initial steps of this chapter. Here is where it might become more evident that a new understanding of Christian anger has got concrete implications for the way Christians think about force. The fifth step will look into two theories with social influence that can be strengthened by this new approach to anger: the just peacemaking project; and the capabilities theory. And finally, in a last step, it will be asked what is it that this kind of righteous anger still does not answer. There are obvious limitations to the argument presented here. Pointing them out is something that can help guide a possible furthering of this project.

The first step can start by paying attention to a powerful couple of paragraphs written by Dorothy Day in *The Long Loneliness*. What I want to propose here is that a pacifist like Day can be ruled by anger and by the kind of force anger would entail, while at the same time disapproving of Just War theory and of the kind of force Just War would entail. This is almost a test-case, where the argument being made is that anger is infused throughout Dorothy Day's writings – even if she does not acknowledge it. Understood in the way it will be suggested in this chapter, anger might have a central role to play in the conception of how and when force can be used by Christianity, in its attempt to proactively protect the innocent from cruelty following the demands of Scripture.

So: Dorothy Day's dissatisfaction in her youth with the way Christianity dealt with social inequality is telling of what a right kind of anger can motivate one to do. Her personal story is also telling of what a right kind of anger can achieve. If the next steps of this chapter succeed in doing what they were meant to do, then it will become obvious that Dorothy Day was righteously motivated by the kind of anger that this thesis wants to develop and consolidate. This is what she writes:

There was a great question in my mind. *Why was so much done remedying social evils instead of avoiding them in the first place?* There were day nurseries for children, for instance, but why didn't fathers get enough money to take care of their families so that mothers would not have to go out to work? There were hospitals to take care of the sick and infirm, and of course doctors were doing much to prevent sickness, but what of occupational diseases, and the diseases which came from not enough food for the mother and children? What of the disabled workers who received no compensation but only charity for the remainder of their lives?

Disabled men without arms and legs, blind men, consumptive men, exhausted men with all the manhood drained from them by industrialism; farmers gaunt and harried with debt; mothers weighed down with children at their skirts, in their arms, in their wombs, children ailing and rickety – all this long procession of desperate people called to me. *Where were the saints to try and change the social order, not just to minister to the slaves but to do away with slavery?*¹¹⁹

These two paragraphs are a helpful summary of what the Christian anger, or an anger that is righteous, is about. The question of why we are remedying the broken social structure only after it is broken, together with the desire to work on mending this broken social order from the roots, and not just patching it up, is what in the next steps will be argued that an appropriate Christian anger consists in. But how does this differ from both our current conception of anger and of force?

The first chapter pointed to the fact that force has long been understood in Christianity as standing in relation to some kind of lack of justice. Just War theory might be the best example of that – although, as it was said in the first chapter, there are attempts to justify the use of force also by focusing on the harms related to a disordered intention,

¹¹⁹ Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 45. Italics added.

or to a lack of legitimate authority. That this understanding of force is problematic will become more evident once a positive account of anger is built over the next two steps of this chapter. The only thing that is worth adding to the problems earlier detected with the conception of force widely accepted in our days – namely, that such force is only reactive and that it is at best thinly grounded on Scripture – is that such force tends to be seen as constituting some kind of exception that must be carefully scrutinized before it is accepted as a valid solution. Force stands at the end of a process of reasoning that has to assess the justice of a cause, the proportionality in the use of force, or the need to employ force only as a last resort. The Church is not, strictly speaking, committed to a radical non-violence in its pacifism. But the employment of force has to obey a number of criteria that are, on the one side, the fruit of a rational deliberation; and that constitute, on the other side, an exception to an otherwise well-established rule calling for an avoidance of engaging in forceful actions. Dorothy Day’s simultaneously peaceful and forceful indignation, on the contrary, is not exception-based. It intends to do away with all sorts of slaveries, and with all sorts of social evils that need to be avoided in any circumstance. It embodies a permanent concern that calls for permanent action. More on this will be said further on.

Anger, too, is problematic. Martha Nussbaum’s work, now made explicit in *Anger and Forgiveness*, shows a wide distrust towards seeing anger with a positive eye. The Stoic project of taming the emotions, or of engaging in some quite radical kind of emotional therapy, is not a project of the past. So, in general, the secular idea of anger leaves unaddressed the question of knowing how and when can anger be of use. Generally speaking, anger is talked about as something to be controlled or even repressed. The same happens in most Christian approaches to anger. Some of the early Fathers were quite unsympathetic in their views of anger. But also, and perhaps most importantly, there have

been depreciative hints in the Church's magisterium which see anger as a dangerous emotion to be combated.¹²⁰ There is a move often made linking anger to rage, or to resentment, which is interpreted as being contrary to the Gospel's peaceful commands. And so, anger is often considered something to eschew.

The main problem about Christianity's conception of anger, though, is the fact that such a strong association is made between anger and slight. This Aristotelian insight, seconded by saint Thomas Aquinas, is in many ways largely unhelpful. In order to build, or to rediscover, a conception of anger that is righteous and that can bring about a new way of understanding why and when force can be used by Christians, this association between anger and slight will have to be revisited. That is what by and large will be made in the third step of this chapter. But before that can be done, something has to be said about what is the strength behind a renewed theory of the emotions. That is how Christianity can start taking seriously Dorothy Day's initial call to avoid social evils, and not only remedy them.

The lengthy discussion offered in the previous chapter on the nature of the emotions can be made concrete at this point. As an emotion, anger – understood, for now, in a general sense, with no terminological refinement yet – will be subject to whatever other emotions are. Hence the insistence on Nussbaum's theory of the emotions, widely shared by Sorabji. The idea that emotions are natural dispositions is important. It is also accurate. The Aristotelian biology that is frequently ignored when thinking about the emotions is constitutive of what the emotions are. It is true that nowadays the emotions are addressed

¹²⁰ Although much of this question has to do with terminology, it is especially relevant the article on the Fifth Commandment in the Catechism of the Catholic Church – where anger is associated with envy and vengeance. The largely unsympathetic way in which anger is described in the CCC is revealing of the connotations associated with the word.

much more often from a neurosciences perspective, posing the question of their nature more on the realm of whether they imply some sort of neurological determinism into what human agency is about. But Aristotle's claim is not that one. Rather, what Aristotle argues is that human beings act emotionally – not just that they think emotionally. Although some prominence has been given in recent years to the way emotions are part of one's moral life, the fact is that it is not difficult to find authors who have serious reserves about employing such vocabulary.¹²¹ There are several challenges in order to turn things around and to rediscover what the implications of such biology are.

Two difficulties that the view according to which emotions are natural dispositions has to contend with are the issue of moderation, and the issue of rational deliberation. The issue of moderation was already presented in the discussion of the reach and need for the emotions to be subjected to some kind of therapy – either in order to restrain them, or in order to suppress them altogether. But no suppression of the emotions seems to be wise if the emotions are seen as being that which feeds moral deliberation. There is not much more to say about this other than circling around Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle. The triad biology-emotion-dispositions that Nussbaum advocates as being the core of Aristotle's virtues is something compelling. What it means is that, regardless of whether one accepts

¹²¹ Alasdair MacIntyre might be the most relevant example of this. Even though MacIntyre describes the process leading to the Aristotelian practical syllogism in a way that is greatly similar, for instance, to Nussbaum's description of the emotions as cognitive in nature, his overall position is still marked by the criticism addressed towards the emotivism that in A. J. Ayer and C. L. Stevenson was seen as being based on perceptions, and not on assertions. A theory of the emotions such as espoused by Ayer and Stevenson constitutes a great obstacle for a reasoned ethics – and, as such, is avoided by MacIntyre in his attempt to rediscover the validity of the virtues. For MacIntyre on the practical syllogism, see *After Virtue* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 161-162; and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 129-131. For MacIntyre on emotivism, see especially *After Virtue*, 11-13.

the Stoic catalogue of the four basic passions or not, the issue surrounding anger should not be one of apathy, but one of moderation. The emotions being a kind of imprint that the physical and social reality impose upon oneself, not as “mindless pushes” but as “complex forms of intentionality infused with object-directed thought,” they are not something that can be erased from one’s moral life.¹²² Instead, they are a significant element of what one’s moral life is. The implications for a study on anger are obvious: the big question about anger is not whether it should be erased or whether it should be suppressed. First and foremost, the question about anger is what does its intentionality consist in. It is a question about the object. The matter of the appropriate measure will flow from there.

The crucial matter to be derived from this theory of the emotions for a study about anger is that the key question has to do with anger’s object. There is something else to note, though. As described in the previous chapter, there is a close connection between emotion and action: emotions are not hermetic considerations on one’s surroundings. As Nussbaum says, emotions are not feelings. They are embodied intentions, standing at the basis of one’s habitual dispositions. There is surprisingly little written on this from a Christian perspective, however. But this theory of the emotions that sees emotions as cognitive in nature can help resituate the question of anger from an explicitly biblical point of view. What it can do to Christianity is bringing about the understanding that when getting the money changers out of the temple, Jesus did not act while being angry: Jesus acted because he was angry. Also, the father in the parable of the prodigal son does not run to the younger son while experiencing compassion: the father acts because of that compassion. Jesus is moved by that anger, in the same way that the father is moved by compassion. Or, to say it differently, Jesus acts *in* anger; and the father acts *in* compassion. The fact that this link

¹²² Martha Nussbaum, “Virtue Ethics: a Misleading Category?,” *The Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999), 180.

has not been made in a more vigorous way in contemporary Christianity is quite surprising. There is, of course, one discreet exception in the writings of Pope Francis – who in his texts occasionally says that Christians will act “moved by” the suffering of the poor, or by the desire to bring peace to the world. This is precisely what emotions do: they move. They are cognitive in nature, and they embody intentions.

A theory of the emotions as the one espoused in the previous chapter is not needed in order to advance the academy, but rather in order to reconnect Christianity with its way of living the ethical life. Virtue Ethics is promising as a Christian attempt to understand the Gospels precisely because it takes the role of the emotions seriously – perhaps too often over-identifying it with the language of the habitual dispositions, although in any case understanding well how the emotions are to play a role in bringing the Christian closer to the Christ. Much more could be done in order to make more explicit this relation between the emotions, action, and the Gospel.

This third step is, in many ways, the one that this thesis is about. What was written so far is either a preparation for this, or a consequence of this – even if the steps following this one will help to further the consequences of what is being said here. In the first chapter, it was claimed that the way force is understood in Christianity is flawed and needs revising. And in the second chapter, it was said that anger is an emotion that can be read in a number of different ways. The terminological hurdles that modern languages face require some appropriation of the term. That being done, the link between anger and force might be possible to establish.

A significant part of the attraction Christianity has towards its explanations for the use of force and subsequently for its distaste of anger has to do with the orderliness of that

scheme. In other words, Christianity likes Just War because it is neat: it is like a well assorted basket, where its contents are tidily organized. The way force is traditionally justified in Christianity is compelling because it gives a layout that can be used to assess basically any sort of conflict: if the *jus ad bellum* requisites are gathered, then the use of force is justified; and if the *jus ad bellum* requisites are not gathered, then the use of force cannot be justified. The *jus in bello* and the *jus post bellum* criteria would then have in their turn to be respected, making it easy to judge whether force has obeyed what are basically rules intending to restrict the use of force as much as possible. The whole process is orderly. However, as it has been claimed, the problem with this attractive orderliness is that ultimately it does not work for Christianity: its Scriptural backing is insufficient; it leaves the innocent exposed; and it only addresses harm reactively. Anger, on the contrary, has a messier decision process associated with it – starting with the ambiguity surrounding its object.

So: as was seen earlier on, in the Thomistic formulation force in war is a subset of charity, hence having union as its object. And the justice of one's cause is the first criterion to be observed when a potential conflict emerges, in such a way that the force employed in war and the force employed in a situation either of murder or of sedition become subject to the same vocabulary. In other words, although war is in the Thomistic schema discussed under the vices against the virtue of charity, it can only be virtuous if it follows the demands of justice in its implementation. And one of the demands of justice is that an offense has been perpetrated unjustly – thus imposing force where force was not due. Likewise, the way anger is often understood in Christianity is informed by the vocabulary of justice, or of an offense committed against justice, that results in a slight. Saint Thomas, as was said, voices in this point the Aristotelian tradition and becomes one of its important defenders.

Anger is generally seen as something that can be harmful, as it may blind the agent and make the agent act in a way that is irrational, or unmeasured. By and large, both the Christian and the Stoic traditions would share this view. Anger, in the Aristotelian theory, might have a role to play for the construction of a good society – but even in its Thomistic appropriation, that role is largely lost.

All these considerations on force and on anger are indeed quite orderly. They are, however, also quite unhelpful. Once again, the real question is about knowing what Christian anger really is and what it really can achieve. The relation that can be established between anger and force will then follow from one's understanding of anger, and not from one's understanding of justice. What first and foremost should come under scrutiny is what is the object of anger. But here, as Harris and Konstan so helpfully remarked, there is an imminent problem related to what kind of anger do we mean when we use the word anger. Terminology is a big problem. It is a big problem that the meaning of the word is either associated with slight, or that it is associated with resentment. Both ways of thinking about anger have an immediate negative connotation, implying either some sort of selfishness or some sort of lack of magnanimity in the agent (the person who cannot let go of the slight received is the person who lacks in humility; and the person who lets resentment take hold of himself is the person who has a sense of entitlement towards life, being unable to live content in any situation, either in need or in plenty, like Saint Paul in Phil 4:12). Popular as these understandings of anger might have become, they are nonetheless not quite the ones that can help Christianity grow in faithfulness to its foundation. Righteous anger is not really the anger that can claim slight as its object – at least not in the biblical tradition. Righteous anger, this thesis is proposing, is not primarily about justice, but is primarily

about charity. More precisely, it is primarily about lack of charity in the exercise of power. That is the object of a Christian, righteous anger.

Righteous anger seen in this way faces many challenges. Among others, it faces the not small challenge of arguing for the validity of the claim that its object should be revised. Part of this argument is – just like Thomas’ classification of anger under the virtues of temperance and justice – largely arbitrary. It is an argument based on what seems to be right. And it seems to be right to say, among other things, that what motivates the protests of the likes of Dorothy Day, or of Desmond Tutu, or of the Berrigan brothers, is in many ways independent of a kind of social contract being broken. The action of these people is not due to a slight in the first place. It is not a quest only for formal justice, in terms of reestablishing order after harm was brought when harm was not due. Rather, people like Day, Tutu, and Berrigan, are motivated by the lack of charity in the way power is being used. Justice is present, but anger seen in this way is primarily a subset of charity and only secondarily a subset of justice. People like Day, Tutu, and the Berrigans are striving for union, in the proper Thomistic sense of the term. Lack of union in the way power is exercised is what motivates them. That is what “moves them.” There is an emotion leading to action – an emotion that is cognitive of the social situation, and that manifests itself in actions that in their turn can be forceful. But above anything else, what they aim for is charity in the exercise of power. Not necessarily justice in a strict, isolated, formal sense.

The righteous anger that motivates the Catholic Work Movement, for instance, is also the same kind of righteous anger that motivates the Homeric hero. Achilles is motivated by the arbitrariness of power – which happens to be unjust, but it is unjust not because of what is due but rather because of what is random. When the Greeks talk about indignation, as Harris showed, the question is not necessarily about justice or about

resentment. It is not necessarily connected to an action that has already taken place and that calls for an urgent response – which is how force is understood in the large Christian tradition, implying a response to a harm that was done. In the Greek tradition, as in the Catholic Work Movement, and also as was suggested that happens in the Scripture, righteous anger is related to the positive desire of living in a society that promotes and protects certain kinds of goods. It is very much an emotion with positive content, and not a negative reaction to harm or to slight. For that reason, it could do Christianity a great deal of good if some distancing from the justice language as it has traditionally been conceived could actually be achieved: Christian anger as an emotion is not about slight, but is about both charity and justice – or, really, about justice shaped by charity. Understood in this way, anger offers Christianity a bigger arch when thinking about force. It also offers Christianity a way to think about force that is rooted in better foundations.

Before engaging in this question of whether righteous anger is responsive or promotive – which is another way to engage in the question of whether righteous anger is reactive or proactive – a couple more notes should be made on its object. Saying that anger is related to a lack of charity in the use of power is saying that anger is primarily a social virtue. It has institutional consequences and often has an institutional language. This is a language that calls for transformation, and for a kind of transformation that is to be applied to the life of communities. Most of what happened in the Arab Spring revolutions, just as an example among others, can be said to be based in this need for transformation. There is a righteous anger that is not necessarily based on the breach of a contract between two parts, hence implying that something that was due was in the end not delivered; and there is necessarily no slight, as the relations between rulers and subjects does not really fit the categories of personal belittlement. In these revolutions, regardless of their merits and of

their commendableness, what is being sought is great union. They are aimed at a power that operates without regard for the unity of a people. The object of the anger expressed in Cairo, in Beirut, or in Damascus, is not slight but lack of a power exercised with charity. This is a relevant turn and one that can have a lasting impact in the way moral theorists think about anger.

Likewise, Jesus seems to righteously act angrily against a power that is exercised without charity. The episode overthrowing the tables of the moneychangers in the temple risks being overused, but that is indeed a situation where Jesus is not reacting against any sort of slight. Again, there is nothing due in that situation that is not being delivered according to a contract; and there is no personal belittlement. Jesus' anger does make sense if read under the Aristotelian notion of slight. What was argued in the last chapter was that Jesus' actions seem to be performed out of zeal. Curiously, zeal is in the Thomistic scheme an effect of love – which is a concupiscible passion, motivated by the quest for what is good (I-II Q.28 a.4). But the point to be made here, in this step of the argument, is not one of vindicating or refuting the understanding of anger that is being proposed based either on Aquinas or on the rejection of Aquinas. The point being made is that an anger that is righteous has as its object a power that lacks in charity. And that is what Jesus appears to do: Jesus throws away that which puts a price on union with God. What is thrown away is the instrument of exercising power over the poor who are impotent before that power. It is motivated by zeal. The same happens in the episode mentioned in Mark, when Jesus is angry at the Pharisees. Once again, the question is not about slight. Rather it is about deliberately failing to show charity towards the person who is in need of healing. It is a

power that does not bother to show charity – hence its sinfulness, contrasted to the sinlessness of Jesus’ anger.¹²³

The question about sin is indeed quite appropriate in this discussion. The discussion around the Psalms, Ephesians, and Proverbs, should be read in this light. A power that is exercised with charity is not sinful. One can then be angry without incurring sin inasmuch as charity is what motivates one’s forceful action. The connection between anger and force can finally be developed. A sinful power, exercised without charity, is the object of anger. But a power exercised with charity, on the contrary, can be an instrument of love and consequently union. This is what one sees in Jesus – in a special way in the two episodes mentioned, particularly interesting because some kind of forcefulness is employed by Jesus in both cases. Zeal, which is an effect of love, constitutes the motivation for that force. And such a force is not sinful. One can be angry, and one can employ force, without incurring sin. This step, unusual as it may sound, seems to be much more faithful to what is the Christian foundation when it comes to think about using force than the one developed over the centuries and which culminated in the language of Just War. Force can be used not primarily in order to promote justice, but in order to promote charity. Because there are situations in plenty where lack of justice, either in the form of slight or in other forms, are not really present – but still require action just so that charity is promoted. Some of those will be explored in the next two steps.

The shift that is suggested here is that Christianity might in some circumstances be justified to use force as a consequence of an anger that is righteous. Such force would not

¹²³ This formulation of a power that does not bother to show charity is basically just a paraphrase of James Keenan’s description of sin as consisting in a failure in bothering to love – which will be available in the forthcoming *A Brief History of Catholic Ethics*, ch. 1.

be sinful: it is bringing about unity, and zeal is one of its expressions. The object and content of anger as an emotion is all the more interesting if a break with the traditional idea of slight is made. That is why, despite all the merits of people like Mattison or Jaycox, this argument is in the end of the day not really about their own appreciations of what righteous anger is. Both offer compelling readings of Aquinas. But both offer readings, as was said here, that look at a misleading object. Although breaking with them might be painful, this exercise of digging deeper into the tradition of anger is what is called for here.

This leads to the fourth step. Asking what can anger do for Christianity if perceived in the way just suggested leads to two concrete implications: the one that refers to the time of the action; and the one that refers to the mode of the action. The question about the time is the one alluded to already a good number of times. In the tradition that sees anger as related to a slight, anger is – in Aquinas’ terms – an irascible passion. It is a passion that is imprinted upon the soul, leading to a reaction. The subject reacts to the slight with anger. The action follows from the perception of an injury committed. The same happens in the way Christianity thinks about force: it is reactive, and looks to restore a balance that was lost because injustice was already committed. The strength of this approach is that it is concrete: one can see whether harm was already committed or not. And one can see whether the threat one is being faced with is serious or not. But again, this way of proceeding is only possible because anger is linked to slight and force has chiefly to be associated with a cause that is just. The contractuality that the language of justice presupposes determines the outcome of how action is to be carried.

From the beginning of this thesis, however, it has been suggested that Christianity should think of force not after an initial harm was committed, but before harm has even

had the chance to be committed. Force is something that can be used proactively, and not reactively. It was also said that the association between force and anger is what can allow for this way to think about force. Once again, that short excerpt from Dorothy Day's *Long Loneliness* can be illustrative: avoiding the social evils, and altogether changing the social order, is what the saints who aspire for power to be exercised with charity do.¹²⁴ Understood as an emotion that is cognitive in nature, and that carries within itself an intentionality that leads to action, righteous anger can become a habitual disposition in the agent. And as a habitual disposition, righteous anger is an emotion that the soul is inclined to seek – to use the Thomistic vocabulary explored in the first chapter. Righteous anger is a concupiscible power. It is proactive: it seeks to bring about union actively, so that power may be exercised out of charity.

What this means for Christianity is that righteous anger will require the Church to grow in the awareness of what it is that can be done to promote union. The Catholic Worker Movement's quest for better working conditions in factories or urban businesses is a good example of this. But such a way to being righteously angry can have other consequences. It can lead the Church to recognize, for instance, that in situations like the ones that took place in Rwanda, in Yugoslavia, or in Darfur, force should have been employed before a

¹²⁴ A source of confusion here might come from the fact that the idea of changing a social order requires a social order that is broken, therefore calling for change. This might seem to make of righteous anger a reactive phenomenon – as if anger was formulating a kind of “never again moment,” but which must originate somewhere. What is argued here is that even if a particular situation might spark the emotion, righteous anger is not dependent of particular situations of outrage to exist. Watching television late at night and having a “never again can we have a child starving” moment, for instance, can be the origin of one's anger; but what follows from there is irrespective of that particular situation, where that particular situation of that particular child starving is being addressed. This initial moment that sparks anger is not necessary anymore in the future of the person who commits to bringing health to the ones who are sick, food to the hungry, or peace to countries stricken by civil war – irrespective of the particular situation that originated the righteous anger.

genocide had taken place. Jesus' zeal, or Jesus' anger, that resorted to force, should have been emulated in all these places – especially given that in all three of them the UN was in a position to take action in the initial stages of the conflicts. All these three situations show how a power void of charity can destroy our world. The Church's position in a situation like that cannot be that of someone who is expectantly waiting to see how the conflict will unfold. On the contrary: if power is being used without charity, then the virtuous Christian will have to show how righteous anger is the appropriate emotion to display.

Likewise, having a stronger understanding of how force and anger are related could have brought the Church to understand that there were red flags to be noticed when the US supported most of the Arab Spring movements. Although the language used in the beginning of those conflicts evoked both matters of auto-determination and of justice, claiming that being unable to select their government forced a people to have to endure an abuse of their rights, it should have been noticeable that the motivation for the employment of force was ambiguous – to say the least. Because what was being targeted in the support pledged by the US to some obscure factions in these Arab Spring movements was not the development of a power informed by charity, but rather the perpetuation of a geopolitical and economic privilege, the force used in these situations can hardly be said to be Christian. Christianity does not abide by the realist agenda.¹²⁵ But because the vocabulary of justice is so prevalent in the way Christianity thinks about force, it became difficult to denounce with one voice the violence brought to peoples all across northern Africa.

¹²⁵ For a basic appreciation of what the realist paradigm is, see Richard Ned Lebow, "Classical Realism," in *International Relations Theories*, edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). As a theory, realism is very much foreign to theology and to theological thought. With the notable exception of Reinhold Niebuhr, Christianity has by and large avoided associations with both political and ethical realism.

Righteous anger, and righteous anger's object, neither make force necessarily a more widespread, nor a less widespread phenomenon. Anger will call for force whenever union is at risk, or whenever union is not even being sought. But anger will criticize force whenever that force is being used without a desire for bringing charity to the exercise of power. There is a serious reflection to be made on the mode of Christian action that is not to be dependent on the application of formal criteria alone, but which requires prudence in its elaboration. The proactiveness of righteous anger consists in the fact that this anger does not restrict itself to responding to an urgent situation where injustice brings about violence that must be repudiated. Both in international affairs, and in domestic affairs, this anger so motivated by charity can mobilize the Church to challenge the way power is used. Such an understanding of force and of anger might not carry within itself a rule for its application that is as concrete as that devised by the Just War tradition, with all its neat criteria well figured out. In any case, this is an understanding of force and of anger that seems to have a stronger foundation in the Scripture; and that seems to safeguard better the innocents who either need to be protected from the use of force, or who need to be protected with the use of force.

The fifth step only makes sense if the previous four are convincing – even if, as it might be the case, convincing in a way that needs a good amount of purging and of chiseling in order to achieve its full potential. This is the step where righteous anger can lend a hand to either the just peacemaking project, or to the human development approach – also known as the capabilities theory.¹²⁶ Looking at the just peacemaking project, what

¹²⁶ There is a good article on the capability approach in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. See Ingrid Robeyns, "The Capability Approach," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition),

righteous anger can offer is exactly what in her “Just Peacemaking: Theory, Practice, and Prospects” Lisa Cahill has said that would be needed in order for this project to reconcile the simultaneous realities of love, justice, and sin. As Cahill says in such a succinct way, the just peacemaking project would be strengthened by a stronger doctrine of sin, and “an ethical justification of coercion.”¹²⁷ Her own solution claims that just peacemaking should seek to add “an Augustinian or Niebuhrian dimension of realism to what seems to have been a meeting of the non-violence principle of the historic peace churches and the social optimism of a Walter Rauschenbusch or a Pope John XXIII.”¹²⁸ This realist solution, however, would face the same questions that it was said to be present in any justification of force based on the vocabulary of justice. While Lisa Cahill seems to be spot on when identifying the need for an ethical justification of coercion as the next step required to make of just peacemaking a project with wider reach, the suggestion being made here is that righteous anger can offer more to just peacemaking than realism. A couple of short notes can be added to this.

Firstly, righteous anger can be a powerful way for a community to be strengthened around its core identity. Glen Stassen, as Cahill points out, says that the just peacemaking project is about community-building more than it is about normative practices which either

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/capability-approach/>. The bibliography provided there is excellent. As for the just peacemaking tradition, the reference would be Glen Stassen and his *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998). More recently, his *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008). Another interesting collection of articles can be found in Robert Schreiter, Scott Appleby, and Gerard Powers, *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010). This last book has a terrific chapter by Lisa Cahill on reconciliation.

¹²⁷ Lisa Cahill, “Just Peacemaking: Theory, Practice, and Prospects,” in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (2003): 195-212 (195).

¹²⁸ Cahill, “Just Peacemaking,” 196.

command or forbid certain kinds of behavior.¹²⁹ This is one of the elements that a richer understanding of righteous anger can offer: a community where power is exercised with charity is a community where union – with God and neighbor – is present. Educating in this emotion is key for a community to know what their practices and goals are. To use Alasdair MacIntyre’s expression, a good deal of the moral life of a community is about the “education sentimentale” that leads people not only to act, or think, in particular ways, but also to feel in particular ways.¹³⁰ If this insight was explored further, then the link between just peacemaking and the virtuous life could be strengthened – in a way that ethical realism could not match. That is something that would benefit the just peacemaking project, as it would provide a stronger foundation for its ethical demands; and that would benefit virtue ethics, as it would make it more concrete when asked to think about situations where violence is present in the world.

In addition to this point, basing the need to find an ethical justification for coercion on the vocabulary of righteous anger and not on the justice-inspired vocabulary of realism could also meet Cahill’s corrective to Glen Stassen’s three theological convictions that stand at the basis of the just peacemaking theory.¹³¹ Cahill, as noted above, says that just peacemaking must be able to have sin as a key theological doctrine; and force as one of the

¹²⁹ Cahill, “Just Peacemaking,” 197. The article Cahill is commenting on is Glen Stassen’s “The Unity, Realism, and Obligatoriness of Just Peacemaking Theory,” *Journal Of The Society Of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (2003): 171-94.

¹³⁰ See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 197: “Virtues are dispositions not only to act in particular ways, but also to feel in particular ways. To act virtuously is not, as Kant was later to think, to act against inclination; it is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues. Moral education is an ‘education sentimentale’.”

¹³¹ The three convictions are “a concept of discipleship grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; a commitment to further God’s reign by pursuing justice in a broken world; and a vision of the church as the eschatological sign of God’s reign in the world” (see Cahill, “Just Peacemaking,” 201; and Stassen, “The Unity,” 191ss).

just peacemaking practices. There are concrete institutional suggestions made by Lisa Cahill, including enforcing trade sanctions or giving some agent or nation bad press. The goal of this essay is not to elaborate on how righteous anger can be made concrete. Rather, the goal is only to point out that the problem Cahill is noticing seems to be solved better by resource to the righteous anger language than they to the ethical realism language. Vague as these notes may be, what they attempt to do is just show that the corrective just peacemaking is looking for can come from a renewal of the understanding of righteous anger better than from a renewal of a Niebuhr-inspired ethical realism.

A similar case could be made for the usefulness of this righteous anger to the development of Martha Nussbaum's human development approach. Although Nussbaum, as already noted, looks at anger with largely unsympathetic eyes, her capabilities approach project is based on this same desire for union – even if the word charity is not used. By and large, Nussbaum's capabilities are a social equalizer that aims at creating a mechanism based on which no power can be exercised without charity. In practical terms, this means that no state can fail to provide an appropriate education to their citizens, for instance. It also means that health, or imagination, or the development of one's practical reason are capabilities that power cannot fail to develop.¹³² Her list of the ten basic capabilities is a practical attempt to create in a society the mechanisms according to which charity is not forgotten. And in many ways, what grounds this list – and her enquiry as a whole – is something very similar to this righteous anger that has been described in this chapter.

To make matters more concrete, it can just be said that the way Nussbaum criticizes a GDP-based approach as the main tool to derive conclusions regarding the state of

¹³² For an introduction to how different capabilities can be listed, see Robeyns, "The Capability Approach," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, §3.2.

development of a country is in every way compatible with this view of righteous anger that has been voiced. There is a prophetic tone in Nussbaum that is not that remote from Dorothy Day's. Her question is at all times not "how much is enough," but rather "what are people actually able to do and be?"¹³³ Nussbaum is looking for meaningful lives, and her description of Vasanti – a poor Indian woman from Gujarat who is granted a small loan, and is therefore able to start a business that allows her and her family financial independence – is in all accounts an example of how anger, as an emotion, righteously leads to a desire for change and transformation. In a question that could lead many moral theorists in their pursuits, Nussbaum says: "suppose for a moment that we were interested not in economic or political theory but just in people: what would we notice and consider salient about Vasanti's story?"¹³⁴ Analyzing Vasanti's situation from the perspective of domestic violence, gender disparity, religious affiliation, and home income, Nussbaum builds a compelling case for her capabilities approach as the best way to assess the development of a people. But what is important to notice is not so much the conclusions of Nussbaum's theory. Rather, as mentioned, what is remarkable is the fact that Nussbaum is moved by this desire to see power being exercised with charity: not according to numbers or stats, but according to the union that is actually fostered. This is righteous anger. And bringing the vocabulary of righteous anger to Nussbaum's theory could make even more explicit what her goal is: not only progress, but union.¹³⁵

¹³³ Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, x.

¹³⁴ Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 4.

¹³⁵ A third project not mentioned here, but which would be extremely interesting to see how it could be associated with righteous anger, would be the field of university ethics – particularly, in what comes to athletics and to the demands placed on student athletes. Righteous anger could play an important role in helping counter a power that is too often exercised with no charity. For a thorough account of what the problems posed to a university ethics are, see James Keenan, *University Ethics: Why Colleges Need A Culture*

The sixth and last step is a sad one, but one that is an unavoidable conclusion. Unfortunately, this account of righteous anger has flaws that must be overcome. Three in particular can be detailed. First and foremost, this is in many ways an incipient account of how anger can change our understanding of force. It is an incipient account of why it is that in practical terms this understanding of righteous anger should be favored to an approach based on the Just War grammar. After all, Just War theory has got a set of rules, or of procedures, that make its application and assessment palpable. Nothing of that was really offered throughout these pages. It would seem that no criticism can in practice be addressed towards our current conception of force, unless a new practical conception of force is being put forth.

This is a fair criticism. It is also just the realization that in order to be operative, righteous anger needs to build that practical procedure that at the moment is so evidently lacking. But that was never the goal of these pages: what was intended here was merely the raising of the awareness that there are problems with the way Christianity looks at force, and that there is an alternative tradition that has been forgotten – although this alternative tradition has the potential, in theory, to make up for the mistakes of our current one. In other words, this thesis does not intend to solve the problem. All it aims to do is flag that problem and point to a possible solution that still needs developing. Still, as it was said in the introduction, what can be suggested here is that there is a possible alliance to be established between an account of righteous anger like the one proposed and the future of the just peacemaking project. This is probably the most promising avenue for the future of

of Ethics (Rowman and Littlefield, May 2015). This might indeed be one of the most promising fields for the future of virtue ethics, particularly in the excellent approach developed by Keenan.

both the just peacemaking project and a new Christian understanding of force based on the language of anger. On the one hand, just peacemaking can find in righteous anger the justification for the exercise of coercion that it has been looking for; and, on the other hand, just peacemaking can help righteous anger tame its impetus, and purify it in order to see it becoming more and more a tool for peace – which would, at the end of the day, also provide the Augustinian theological framework that at times seems to be lacking in the recent tradition of just peacemaking.

The second evident flaw of this thesis is its lack of integration in a major virtue theory.¹³⁶ The virtue vocabulary was not often used often in an explicit way in this text, but it should be quite evident that there is a strong connection to be established between righteous anger as an emotion and the virtues as habitual dispositions to the good. This is an even bigger flaw given the fact that so much was said in reference to Martha Nussbaum – who is herself one of the key contributors to the revival of the debate in contemporary academy about how a virtue ethics can be developed. Whether with or without close references to Nussbaum, it seems as if this thesis could had worked more successfully on the integration of righteous anger in the broader framework of the quest for a virtuous life.

There is no way to work around this. What can be said is that this way of understanding the emotions should call for an understanding of the virtues that is in philosophical terms more Homeric than it is Stoic. There is a vocabulary of bravery and of

¹³⁶ Particularly interesting would be to see this thesis evolving in a direction where it could become integrated in James Keenan's "7 Reasons for Doing Virtue Ethics Today," *Virtue and the Moral Life: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives*, edited by Kathryn Getek Soltis and William Werpehowski (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 3-18. This is a text that can in some ways be seen as building on what Keenan had done earlier in the fundamental "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies*, 56 (1995): 709-729. The transformative role of righteous anger could both profit from this integrated approach and also offer it a new language to talk about the role virtue ethics has to play in a secular society.

honor to be rediscovered, associated with a quest for magnanimity and for nobility. Homer can deliver this. But at the same time, there is a language of discipline and of asceticism that also needs to be present in this virtue framework. This language should create a certain distance from a soteriology that is only immanent, and that looks at the consequences of force as a reality that is ultimate. This is a step where – speaking in the vaguest terms – returning to the Fathers of the Church would be the most helpful. The future of righteous anger seems to need to combine these two trends in the way the virtues are understood. That work was not done here, unfortunately.

The third flaw this thesis has not really coped with is the one related to the obvious arbitrariness in vocabulary. Michael Jaycox, William Mattison, or Martha Nussbaum, not to mention Saint Thomas Aquinas and so much of the Christian tradition over the last several hundred centuries, have all used the word anger associated with an object that was rejected here. At best, it might sound arrogant to claim that the way almost everyone else has been thinking about anger is misled. That arrogance is part of this thesis. What is not part of this thesis is saying, if anger is to be associated with power and charity, then what is it that we have been calling anger and that is associated with slight. There is enough confusion in matters like these when two different emotions have two different names (as it happens between anxiety and apprehension, for instance, or between fear and consternation). But having two different emotions sharing the same name just seems to unnecessarily add to the confusion already in place.

Little can be said about this third issue. True, saying that anger is what follows from power being exercised without charity is the same thing as saying that anger is not what happens when one is faced with slight. At the same time, this is both a minor issue and one that might not really ever have a satisfactory solution: anger is and will be a confusing

word, because – as pointed out in the second chapter – it amalgamates a number of different words which in Greek corresponded to *de facto* different emotions. The haziness involved in this terminological issue might never be solved in a way that is entirely pleasing.

CONCLUSION

This thesis started by saying that from its earliest days, Christianity has debated about when and how force can be used to repel harm without incurring sin. What was argued was that, despite its widespread acceptance and its undeniable historical influence, Just War theory was a flawed model to think about force from a Christian perspective. Just War has thin Scriptural foundation, it can only react to harm that is already happening, and it leaves the innocent too often exposed to harm or cruelty. In lieu of Just War, or of any Just War inspired theory, it was said that retrieving for Christianity the tradition of a righteous anger could bring the Church to understand better the whens and the hows for the use of force. Unlike Just War, anger has Scriptural warrant; it can address harm proactively; and it is primarily motivated by the protection of the innocent. All in all, it was argued, an anger that has as its object some form of power exercised without charity is an anger that can be Christian. Such anger, which in a privileged way can be used to strengthen recent Christian endeavors like the Just Peacemaking project, is what can justify a Christian use of force upon others.

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