

QUESTION 37

Discord

We next have to consider the sins that are opposed to peace: first, discord (*discordia*), which is a sin of the heart (question 37); second, contentiousness (*contentio*), which is a sin of the mouth (question 38); and, third, sinful deeds, viz., schism (*schisma*) (question 39), strife (*rixa*) (question 41), and war (*bellum*) (question 40).

On the first topic there are two questions: (1) Is discord a sin? (2) Is discord a child of vainglory?

Article 1

Is discord a sin?

It seems that discord is not a sin:

Objection 1: To be discordant with someone is to withdraw from his will. But this does not seem to be a sin, since it is only God's will, and not our neighbor's will, that is the rule or standard (*regula*) for our own will. Therefore, discord is not a sin.

Objection 2: If someone induces another to sin, then he himself likewise sins. But to induce discord among certain individuals does not seem to be a sin; for Acts 23:6-7 says, "Paul, knowing that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, cried out in the council, 'Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees; it is concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead that I am called into question.'" Therefore, discord is not a sin.

Objection 3: Sin, especially mortal sin, is not found among holy men. But discord is found among holy men; for Acts 15:39 says, "A disagreement arose between Paul and Barnabas ... with the result that they took their leave from one another." Therefore, discord is not a sin, and especially not a mortal sin.

But contrary to this: In Galatians 5:20, dissensions, i.e., instances of discord, are posited among the works of the flesh, concerning which it is added, "Those who do such things do not attain the kingdom of God." But nothing except mortal sin excludes one from the kingdom of God. Therefore, discord is a mortal sin.

I respond: Discord is opposed to concord. But as was explained above (q. 29, a.3), concord is caused by charity, viz., insofar as charity joins the hearts of many individuals in some one thing, which is principally the divine good and secondarily the good of our neighbor. Therefore, discord is a sin insofar as it is contrary to this sort of concord.

Notice, however, that there are two ways in which concord of this sort is undermined by discord, (a) *per se* and (b) *per accidens*.

(a) In human acts and movements, what is said to be *per se* is what is in accord with one's intention. Hence, someone is discordant with his neighbor *per se* when he knowingly and deliberately dissents from the divine good and from that good of his neighbor which he is obliged to consent to. This is a mortal sin by its genus, because it is contrary to charity—even though the first movements of this sort of discord are venial sins because of the incompleteness of the act.

(b) In human acts, what is considered to be *per accidens* is what lies outside one's intention. Hence, when (a) the intention of two individuals is aimed toward the good that belongs to the honor of God and the advantage of one's neighbor, but (b) one thinks that *this* is good while the other has a contrary opinion, discord in such a case is opposed *per accidens* to the divine good or the good of one's neighbor. And this sort of discord is not a sin and is not incompatible with charity, unless it is accompanied by error concerning what is necessary for salvation or by undue stubbornness. For it was explained above (q. 29, aa. 1 and 3) that the concord which is an effect of charity is a unity of wills and not a unity of opinions.

From this it is clear that discord is sometimes a sin that belongs to one of the individuals, viz., when

the one individual wills the good and the other knowingly resists the good, whereas sometimes the discord is accompanied by sin on both their parts, e.g., when each dissents from the good of the other and loves his own private good instead (*uterque diligit bonum proprium*).

Reply to objection 1: Considered in its own right, the will of one man is not a rule or standard for the will of another man. However, to the extent that the will of one's neighbor adheres to the will of God, it thereby becomes a rule or standard regulated by the First Rule. And so to be discordant with such a will is a sin, since one is thereby discordant with the divine rule.

Reply to objection 2: Just as the will of a man who is adhering to God is a sort of upright rule (*regula recta*) which it is a sin to be discordant with, so, too, a human will that is contrary to God is a sort of perverse rule which it is good to be discordant with. Therefore, to bring about an instance of discord by which the right sort of concord that charity effects is destroyed is a serious sin; hence, Proverbs 6:16 says, "There are six things that the Lord hates, and a seventh that His soul detests," and Proverbs 6:19 posits as this seventh thing "the one who sows discord among his brethren."

However, it is praiseworthy to cause an instance of discord by which a bad concord is destroyed, i.e., concord in a bad will. And in this sense it was praiseworthy for Paul to cause a disagreement among those who were concordant in evil. For in Matthew 10:34 our Lord says, "I have come to bring not peace, but the sword."

Reply to objection 3: The discord between Paul and Barnabas was *per accidens* and not *per se*, since both intended the good, but to the one *this* seemed to be good and to other something else seemed to be good. This had to do with human defectiveness, since the controversy was not about what is necessary for salvation—even though the disagreement was itself ordained by divine providence for the sake of the advantage that resulted therefrom.

Article 2

Is discord a child of vainglory?

It seems that discord is not a child of vainglory:

Objection 1: Anger is a vice distinct from vainglory. But discord seems to be a child of anger—this according to Proverbs 15:18 ("An angry man stirs up strife"). Therefore, it is not a child of vainglory.

Objection 2: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine, in commenting on John 7:39 ("As yet the Spirit had not been given"), says, "Spite (*livor*) separates, whereas charity unites." But discord is nothing other than a certain separation of wills. Therefore, discord proceeds from spite, i.e., envy, more than from vainglory.

Objection 3: What many bad things arise from seems to be a capital vice. But discord is like this, since in *Super Matthaem* 12:25 ("Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate") Jerome says, "In the same way that small things grow by concord, so great things are brought to ruin by discord." Therefore, discord itself should be posited as a capital vice rather than as a child of vainglory.

But contrary to this is the authority of Gregory in *Moralia* 31.

I respond: Discord implies a certain division of wills, viz., insofar as one individual's will insists on one thing and a second individual's will insists on something else. Now the fact that someone's will insists on his own position stems for his preferring what belongs to him over what belongs to others. When this is done in a disordered way, it pertains to pride and vainglory. And so discord, through which one follows his own way and withdraws the other's way, is posited as a child of vainglory.

Reply to objection 1: Strife (*rixa*) is not the same thing as discord (*discordia*). For strife consists in an exterior deed and hence is appropriately caused by anger, which moves the mind to harm one's neighbor. By contrast, discord consists in a disunity of movements of will and is caused by pride or

vainglory in the way already explained.

Reply to objection 2: In the case of discord, what is considered to be the *terminus a quo* is the withdrawal from the other's will, and in this respect it is caused by envy. On the other hand, what is taken to be the *terminus ad quem* is the movement toward what is proper to oneself, and in this respect it is caused by vainglory. And since in every movement the *terminus ad quem* is more significant than the *terminus a quo* (for the end is more significant than the starting point), discord is posited as a child of vainglory more than as a child of envy—even though, as has been explained, it can arise from both of them in different respects.

Reply to objection 3: The reason why big things grow by concord and are made desolate by discord is (a) that the more united a power is, the stronger it is, and (b) that a power is diminished by separation. This is explained in the *Liber de Causis*. Hence, it is clear that this feature pertains to discord's *proper effect*, i.e., the division of wills, but it does not involve the *origin of diverse vices* from discord through which discord might have the character of a capital vice.