

Objection 1. It would seem that the scourges whereby we are punished by God in this life, cannot be satisfactory. For nothing but what is meritorious can be satisfactory, as is clear from what has been said (q. 14, a. 2). But we do not merit except by what is in our own power. Since therefore the scourges with which God punishes us are not in our power, it seems that they cannot be satisfactory.

Objection 2. Further, only the good make satisfaction. But these scourges are inflicted on the wicked also, and are deserved by them most of all. Therefore they cannot be satisfactory.

Objection 3. Further, satisfaction regards past sins. But these scourges are sometimes inflicted on those who have no sins, as in the case of Job. Therefore it seems that they are not satisfactory.

On the contrary, It is written (Rom. 5:3,4): “Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, i.e. deliverance from sin,” as a gloss explains it.

Further, Ambrose says (Super Ps. 118): “Although faith,” i.e. the consciousness of sin, “be lacking, the punishment satisfies.” Therefore the scourges of this life are satisfactory.

I answer that, Compensation for a past offense can be enforced either by the offender or by another. When it is enforced by another, such compensation is of a vindictive rather than of a satisfactory nature, whereas when it is made by the offender, it is also satisfactory. Consequently, if the scourges, which are inflicted by God on account of sin, become in some way the act of

the sufferer they acquire a satisfactory character. Now they become the act of the sufferer in so far as he accepts them for the cleansing of his sins, by taking advantage of them patiently. If, however, he refuse to submit to them patiently, then they do not become his personal act in any way, and are not of a satisfactory, but merely of a vindictive character.

Reply to Objection 1. Although these scourges are not altogether in our power, yet in some respect they are, in so far as we use them patiently. In this way man makes a virtue of necessity, so that such things can become both meritorious and satisfactory.

Reply to Objection 2. As Augustine observes (De Civ. Dei i, 8), even as “the same fire makes gold glisten and straw reek,” so by the same scourges are the good cleansed and the wicked worsened on account of their impatience. Hence, though the scourges are common to both, satisfaction is only on the side of the good.

Reply to Objection 3. These scourges always regard past guilt, not always the guilt of the person, but sometimes the guilt of nature. For had there not been guilt in human nature, there would have been no punishment. But since guilt preceded in nature, punishment is inflicted by God on a person without the person’s fault, that his virtue may be meritorious, and that he may avoid future sin. Moreover, these two things are necessary in satisfaction. For the work needs to be meritorious, that honor may be given to God, and it must be a safeguard of virtue, that we may be preserved from future sins.