

SUPPLEMENT TO THE THIRD PART, QUESTION 2

Of the Object of Contrition (In Six Articles)

We must now consider the object of contrition. Under this head there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether a man should be contrite on account of his punishment?
- (2) Whether, on account of original sin?
- (3) Whether, for every actual sin he has committed?
- (4) Whether, for actual sins he will commit?
- (5) Whether, for the sins of others?
- (6) Whether, for each single mortal sin?

Whether man should be contrite on account of the punishment, and not only on account of his sin?

Suppl. q. 2 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that man should be contrite on account of the punishment, and not only on account of his sin. For Augustine says in *De Poenitentia**: “No man desires life everlasting unless he repent of this mortal life.” But the morality of this life is a punishment. Therefore the penitent should be contrite on account of his punishments also.

Objection 2. Further, the Master says (*Sent. iv, D, 16, cap. i*), quoting Augustine (*De vera et falsa Poenitentia*†), that the penitent should be sorry for having deprived himself of virtue. But privation of virtue is a punishment. Therefore contrition is sorrow for punishments also.

On the contrary, No one holds to that for which he is sorry. But a penitent, by the very signification of the word, is one who holds to his punishment‡. Therefore he is not sorry on account of his punishment, so that contrition which is penitential sorrow is not on account of punishment.

I answer that, As stated above (q. 1, a. 1), contrition implies the crushing of something hard and whole. Now

this wholeness and hardness is found in the evil of fault, since the will, which is the cause thereof in the evil-doer, sticks to its own ground§, and refuses to yield to the precept of the law, wherefore displeasure at a suchlike evil is called metaphorically “contrition.”. But this metaphor cannot be applied to evil of punishment, because punishment simply denotes a lessening, so that it is possible to have sorrow for punishment but not contrition.

Reply to Objection 1. According to St. Augustine, penance should be on account of this mortal life, not by reason of its mortality (unless penance be taken broadly for every kind of sorrow); but by reason of sins, to which we are prone on account of the weakness of this life.

Reply to Objection 2. Sorrow for the loss of virtue through sin is not essentially the same as contrition, but is its principle. For just as we are moved to desire a thing on account of the good we expect to derive from it, so are we moved to be sorry for something on account of the evil accruing to us therefrom.

Whether contrition should be on account of original sin?

Suppl. q. 2 a. 2

Objection 1. It would seem that contrition should be on account of original sin. For we ought to be contrite on account of actual sin; not by reason of the act, considered as a kind of being, but by reason of its deformity, since the act, regarded in its substance, is a good, and is from God. Now original sin has a deformity, even as actual sin has. Therefore we should be contrite on its account also.

Objection 2. Further, by original sin man has been turned away from God, since in punishment thereof he was to be deprived of seeing God. But every man should be displeased at having been turned away from God.

Therefore man should be displeased at original sin; and so he ought to have contrition for it.

On the contrary, The medicine should be proportionate to the disease. Now we contracted original sin without willing to do so. Therefore it is not necessary that we should be cleansed from it by an act of the will, such as contrition is.

I answer that, Contrition is sorrow, as stated above (q. 1, Aa. 1,2), respecting and, so to speak, crushing the hardness of the will. Consequently it can regard those sins only which result in us through the hardness of our will.

* Cf. Hom. 50 inter 1 † Work of an unknown author ‡ “Poenitens,” i.e. “poenam tenens” § There is a play on the words here—‘integer’ (whole) and ‘in suis terminis’ (to its own ground)

And as original sin was not brought upon us by our own will, but contracted from the origin of our infected nature, it follows that, properly speaking, we cannot have contrition on its account, but only displeasure or sorrow.

Reply to Objection 1. Contrition is for sin, not by reason of the mere substance of the act, because it does not derive the character of evil therefrom; nor again, by reason of its deformity alone, because deformity, of itself,

does not include the notion of guilt, and sometimes denotes a punishment. But contrition ought to be on account of sin, as implying deformity resulting from an act of the will; and this does not apply to original sin, so that contrition does not apply to it.

The same Reply avails for the Second Objection, because contrition is due to aversion of the will.

Whether we should have contrition for every actual sin?

Suppl. q. 2 a. 3

Objection 1. It would seem that we have no need to have contrition for every actual sin we have committed. For contraries are healed by their contraries. Now some sins are committed through sorrow, e.g. sloth and envy. Therefore their remedy should not be sorrow, such as contrition is, but joy.

Objection 2. Further, contrition is an act of the will, which cannot refer to that which is not known. But there are sins of which we have no knowledge, such as those we have forgotten. Therefore we cannot have contrition for them.

Objection 3. Further, by voluntary contrition those sins are blotted out which we committed voluntarily. But ignorance takes away voluntariness, as the Philosopher declares (*Ethic.* iii, 1). Therefore contrition need not cover things which have occurred through ignorance.

Objection 4. Further, we need not be contrite for a sin which is not removed by contrition. Now some sins are not removed by contrition, e.g. venial sins, that remain after the grace of contrition. Therefore there is no need to have contrition for all one's past sins.

On the contrary, Penance is a remedy for all actual sins. But penance cannot regard some sins, without contrition regarding them also, for it is the first part of Penance. Therefore contrition should be for all one's past sins.

Further, no sin is forgiven a man unless he be justified. But justification requires contrition, as stated above (q. 1, a. 1; *Ia IIae*, q. 113). Therefore it is necessary to have contrition for all one's sins.

I answer that, Every actual sin is caused by our will not yielding to God's law, either by transgressing it, or by omitting it, or by acting beside it: and since a hard thing is one that is disposed not to give way easily, hence it is that a certain hardness of the will is to be found in every actual sin. Wherefore, if a sin is to be remedied, it needs to be taken away by contrition which crushes it.

Reply to Objection 1. As clearly shown above (a. 2, ad 1), contrition is opposed to sin, in so far as it proceeds from the choice of the will that had failed to obey the command of God's law, and not as regards the material part of sin: and it is on this that the choice of the will falls. Now the will's choice falls not only on the acts of the other

powers, which the will uses for its own end, but also on the will's own proper act: for the will wills to will something. Accordingly the will's choice falls on that pain or sadness which is to be found in the sin of envy and the like, whether such pain be in the senses or in the will itself. Consequently the sorrow of contrition is opposed to those sins.

Reply to Objection 2. One may forget a thing in two ways, either so that it escapes the memory altogether, and then one cannot search for it; or so that it escapes from the memory in part, and in part remains, as when I remember having heard something in general, but know not what it was in particular, and then I search my memory in order to discover it. Accordingly a sin also may be forgotten in two ways, either so as to remain in a general, but not in a particular remembrance, and then a man is bound to bethink himself in order to discover the sin, because he is bound to have contrition for each individual mortal sin. And if he is unable to discover it, after applying himself with due care, it is enough that he be contrite for it, according as it stands in his knowledge, and indeed he should grieve not only for the sin, but also for having forgotten it, because this is owing to his neglect. If, however, the sin has escaped from his memory altogether, then he is excused from his duty through being unable to fulfill it, and it is enough that he be contrite in general for everything wherein he has offended God. But when this inability is removed, as when the sin is recalled to his memory, then he is bound to have contrition for that sin in particular, even as a poor man, who cannot pay a debt, is excused, and yet is bound to, as soon as he can.

Reply to Objection 3. If ignorance were to remove altogether the will to do evil, it will excuse, and there would be no sin: and sometimes it does not remove the will altogether, and then it does not altogether excuse, but only to a certain extent: wherefore a man is bound to be contrite for a sin committed through ignorance.

Reply to Objection 4. A venial sin can remain after contrition for a mortal sin, but not after contrition for the venial sin: wherefore contrition should also cover venial sins even as penance does, as stated above (*Sent.* iv, D, 16, q. 2, a. 2, qu. 2; *Suppl.*, q. 87, a. 1).

Objection 1. It would seem that a man is bound to have contrition for his future sins also. For contrition is an act of the free-will: and the free-will extends to the future rather than to the past, since choice, which is an act of the free-will, is about future contingents, as stated in Ethic. iii. Therefore contrition is about future sins rather than about past sins.

Objection 2. Further, sin is aggravated by the result that ensues from it: wherefore Jerome says* that the punishment of Arius is not yet ended, for it is yet possible for some to be ruined through his heresy, by reason of whose ruin his punishment would be increased: and the same applies to a man who is judged guilty of murder, if he has committed a murderous assault, even before his victim dies. Now the sinner ought to be contrite during that intervening time. Therefore the degree of his contrition ought to be proportionate not only to his past act, but also to its eventual result: and consequently contrition regards the future.

On the contrary, Contrition is a part of penance. But penance always regards the past: and therefore contrition does also, and consequently is not for a future sin.

I answer that, In every series of things moving and moved ordained to one another, we find that the inferior mover has its proper movement, and besides this, it follows, in some respect, the movement of the superior mover: this is seen in the movement of the planets, which, in addition to their proper movements, follow the movement of the first heaven. Now, in all the moral virtues, the first mover is prudence, which is called the charioteer of the virtues. Consequently each moral virtue, in addition to its proper movement, has something of the

movement of prudence: and therefore, since penance is a moral virtue, as it is a part of justice, in addition to its own act, it acquires the movement of prudence. Now its proper movement is towards its proper object, which is a sin committed. Wherefore its proper and principal act, viz. contrition, essentially regards past sins alone; but, inasmuch as it acquires something of the act of prudence, it regards future sins indirectly, although it is not essentially moved towards those future sins. For this reason, he that is contrite, is sorry for his past sins, and is cautious of future sins. Yet we do not speak of contrition for future sins, but of caution, which is a part of prudence conjoined to penance.

Reply to Objection 1. The free-will is said to regard future contingents, in so far as it is concerned with acts, but not with the object of acts: because, of his own free-will, a man can think about past and necessary things, and yet the very act of thinking, in so far as it is subject to the free-will, is a future contingent. Hence the act the contrition also is a future contingent, in so far as it is subject to the free-will; and yet its object can be something past.

Reply to Objection 2. The consequent result which aggravates a sin was already present in the act as in its cause; wherefore when the sin was committed, its degree of gravity was already complete, and no further guilt accrued to it when the result took place. Nevertheless some accidental punishment accrues to it, in the respect of which the damned will have the more motives of regret for the more evils that have resulted from their sins. It is in this sense that Jerome† speaks. Hence there is not need for contrition to be for other than past sins.

Objection 1. It would seem that a man ought to have contrition for another's sin. For one should not ask forgiveness for a sin unless one is contrite for it. Now forgiveness is asked for another's sin in Ps. 18:13: "From those of others spare thy servant." Therefore a man ought to be contrite for another's sins.

Objection 2. Further, man is bound, ought of charity, to love his neighbor as himself. Now, through love of himself, he both grieves for his ills, and desires good things. Therefore, since we are bound to desire the goods of grace for our neighbor, as for ourselves, it seems that we ought to grieve for his sins, even as for our own. But contrition is nothing else than sorrow for sins. Therefore man should be contrite for the sins of others.

On the contrary, Contrition is an act of the virtue of

penance. But no one repents save for what he has done himself. Therefore no one is contrite for others' sins.

I answer that, The same thing is crushed [conteritur] which hitherto was hard and whole. Hence contrition for sin must needs be in the same subject in which the hardness of sin was hitherto: so that there is no contrition for the sins of others.

Reply to Objection 1. The prophet prays to be spared from the sins of others, in so far as, through fellowship with sinners, a man contracts a stain by consenting to their sins: thus it is written (Ps. 17:27): "With the perverse thou wilt be perverted."

Reply to Objection 2. We ought to grieve for the sins of others, but not to have contrition for them, because not all sorrow for past sins is contrition, as is evident for what

* St. Basil asserts this implicitly in De Vera Virgin. † Basil

has been said already.

Whether it is necessary to have contrition for each mortal sin?

Suppl. q. 2 a. 6

Objection 1. It would seem that it is not necessary to have contrition for each mortal sin. For the movement of contrition in justification is instantaneous: whereas a man cannot think of every mortal sin in an instant. Therefore it is not necessary to have contrition for each mortal sin.

Objection 2. Further, contrition should be for sins, inasmuch as they turn us away from God, because we need not be contrite for turning to creatures without turning away from God. Now all mortal sins agree in turning us away from God. Therefore one contrition for all is sufficient.

Objection 3. Further, mortal sins have more in common with one another, than actual and original sin. Now one Baptism blots out all sins both actual and original. Therefore one general contrition blots out all mortal sins.

On the contrary, For diverse diseases there are diverse remedies, since “what heals the eye will not heal the foot,” as Jerome says (Super Marc. ix, 28). But contrition is the special remedy for one mortal sin. Therefore one general contrition for all mortal sins does not suffice.

Further, contrition is expressed by confession. But it is necessary to confess each mortal sin. Therefore it is necessary to have contrition for each mortal sin.

I answer that, Contrition may be considered in two ways, as to its origin, and as to its term. By origin of contrition I mean the process of thought, when a man thinks of his sin and is sorry for it, albeit not with the sorrow of contrition, yet with that of attrition. The term of contrition is when that sorrow is already quickened by grace. Accordingly, as regards the origin of contrition, a man needs

to be contrite for each sin that he calls to mind; but as regards its term, it suffices for him to have one general contrition for all, because then the movement of his contrition acts in virtue of all his preceding dispositions.

This suffices for the Reply to the First Objection.

Reply to Objection 2. Although all mortal sins agree in turning man away from God, yet they differ in the cause and mode of aversion, and in the degree of separation from God; and this regards the different ways in which they turn us to creatures.

Reply to Objection 3. Baptism acts in virtue of Christ’s merit, Who had infinite power for the blotting out of all sins; and so for all sins one Baptism suffices. But in contrition, in addition to the merit of Christ, an act of ours is requisite, which must, therefore, correspond to each sin, since it has not infinite power for contrition.

It may also be replied that Baptism is a spiritual generation; whereas Penance, as regards contrition and its other parts, is a kind of spiritual healing by way of some alteration. Now it is evident in the generation of a body, accompanied by corruption of another body, that all the accidents contrary to the thing generated, and which were the accidents of the thing corrupted, are removed by the one generation: whereas in alteration, only that accident is removed which was contrary to the accident which is the term of the alteration. In like manner, one Baptism blots out all sins together and introduces a new life; whereas Penance does not blot out each sin, unless it be directed to each. For this reason it is necessary to be contrite for, and to confess each sin.