QUESTION 90

The Parts of Penance in General

Next we have to consider the parts of penance. And, first, the parts in general (question 90), and, second, each part specifically (*Supplement*, questions 1-15).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Does penance have parts? (2) How many parts does penance have? (3) What sort of parts does penance have? (4) How is penance divided into subjective parts?

Article 1

Should parts be assigned to penance?

It seems that parts should not be assigned to penance (*poenitentiae non debent partes assignari*):

Objection 1: The sacraments are such that in them the divine power brings about salvation in a somewhat hidden way. But the divine power is one and simple. Therefore, since penance is a sacrament, it should not be assigned parts.

Objection 2: Penance is both a virtue and a sacrament. But insofar as it is a virtue, parts are not assigned to it, since a virtue is a habit, which is a simple quality of the mind. Similarly, insofar as penance is a sacrament, it does not seem that parts should be assigned to it, since parts are not assigned to baptism and the other sacraments. Therefore, no parts should be assigned to penance.

Objection 3: As was explained above (q. 84, aa. 2-3), the matter of penance is sin. But parts are not assigned to sin. Therefore, neither should parts be assigned to penance.

But contrary to this: Parts are such that completeness of a thing is made up of them. But the completeness of penance is made up of several things, viz., *contrition* (*contritio*), *confession* (*confessio*) and *making satisfaction* (*satisfactio*). Therefore, penance has parts.

I respond: The parts of an entity are such that the whole is divided materially into them. For the parts are related to the whole in the way that matter is related to form; hence, in *Physics* 2 the parts are placed in the genus *material cause*, whereas the whole is placed in the genus *formal cause*. Therefore, wherever one finds some sort of plurality on the part of the matter, one will find a rationale for parts.

Now it was explained above (q. 84, a. 1, ad 1-2, and a. 2) that in the case of the sacrament of penance human acts behave in the manner of matter. And so, since, as will be explained below (a. 2), several human acts are required for the completeness of penance, viz., an act of *contrition* (*contritio*), an act of *confessing* (*confessio*), and an act of *making satisfaction* (*satisfactio*), it follows that the sacrament of penance has parts.

Reply to objection 1: Each sacrament has simplicity by reason of the divine power, which operates in it. But because of its magnitude, the divine power can operate both through *one* thing and through *many*. And it is by reason of the *many* that parts can be assigned to a given sacrament.

Reply to objection 2: Penance is not assigned parts insofar as it is a *virtue*, since the human acts that are multiplied in the case of penance are related to the habit of the virtue not as *parts*, but as *effects*.

Hence, what remains is that parts are assigned to penance insofar as it is a *sacrament*, to which the human acts are related as the matter. Now in the case of the other sacraments, it is not human acts that are the matter, but instead some exterior reality—either a *simple* reality, such as water or oil, or a *composite* reality, such as chrism. And that is why parts are not assigned to the other sacraments.

Reply to objection 3: Sins are the *remote* matter of penance, viz., to the extent that they are the

matter, i.e., the object, of the human acts, which are the *proper* matter of penance insofar as it is a sacrament.

Article 2

Is it appropriate to assign *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction* as the parts of penance?

It seems that it is not appropriate to assign *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction* as the parts of penance (*inconvenienter assignentur partes poenitentiae contritio, confessio et satisfactio*):

Objection 1: Contrition exists in the heart, and so it belongs to *interior* penance, whereas confession exists in the mouth and satisfaction in a deed, and so the last two belong to *exterior* penance. But interior penance is not a sacrament; instead, only exterior penance, which is subject to being sensed, is. Therefore, it is inappropriate for these parts to be assigned to the sacrament of penance.

Objection 2: As was established above (q. 62, aa. 1 and 6), grace is conferred in the sacraments of the New Law. But no grace is conferred in making satisfaction. Therefore, satisfaction is not a part of the sacrament.

Objection 3: The *fruit* of a reality is not the same as a *part* of that reality. But making satisfaction is a fruit of penance—this according to Luke 3:8 ("Bring forth fruits befitting repentance!"). Therefore, it is not a part of penance.

Objection 4: Penance is ordered against sin. But as was established in the Second Part (*ST* 1-2, q. 72, a. 7), a sin can be brought to completion only in the heart through consent. Therefore, penance likewise. Therefore, confessing with the mouth and making satisfaction by a deed should not be posited as parts of penance.

But contrary to this: Several parts of penance have to be posited. For it is not only the body, as the matter, that is posited as part of a man, but also the soul, which is the form. But the three things in question behave like the matter, since they are acts of the penitent, whereas the priest's absolution behaves in the manner of a form. Therefore, the priest's absolution should be posited as the fourth part of penance.

I respond: As *Metaphysics* 5 explains, there are two kinds of parts, viz., a part of an *essence* and a part of a *quantity*.

The parts of an *essence* exist *naturally*, to be sure, as the *form* and the *matter*, but they exist *logically* as the *genus* and the *difference*. It is in this way that each sacrament is distinguished into *matter* and *form* as into the parts of its *essence*, and that is why it was said above (q. 60, 4 and 6) that a sacrament consists of *entities* and *words*.

But because the *quantity* stands on the side of the matter, the parts of the quantity are parts of the matter. And this is how parts are assigned specifically to the sacrament of penance, as was explained above (a. 1, ad 2), with respect to the penitent's acts, which are the matter of this sacrament.

Now it was explained above (q. 85, a. 3, ad 3) that repayment for an offense is made in different ways in penance and in retributive justice. For in the case of *retributive justice*, the repayment is made according to the decision of a judge and not in accord with the will of either the offender or the one offended, whereas in the case of *penance*, repayment for an offense is made in accord with the will of the sinner and in accord with the judgment of God, against whom the sin is committed. For what is being

sought here is not, as in the case of retributive justice, a restoration of the balance of justice, but instead the reconciliation of a friendship, and this is accomplished when the offender repays in accord with the will of the one whom he has offended.

So, then, what is required on the part of the penitent is, first of all, (a) a willingness to repay, and this is done through an act of *contrition*; second, (b) that he subject himself to the judgement of the priest who is acting in the place of God, and this is done through an act of *confessing*; third, (c) that he repay according to the judgment of God's minister, and this is done in an act of *making satisfaction*.

And that is why contrition, confession, and satisfaction are posited as the parts of penance.

Reply to objection 1: According to its *essence*, contrition is, to be sure, in the heart and belongs to interior penance, but it belongs *virtually* to exterior penance, viz., insofar as it involves the intention to confess and to make satisfaction.

Reply to objection 2: An act of making satisfaction confers grace when it exists in one's *intention*, and it adds grace when it exists in one's *execution*—in the same way that, as was explained above (q. 68, a. 2 and q. 69, a. 1, ad 2, and a. 4, ad 2), baptism does in the case of adults.

Reply to objection 3: Making satisfaction is a *part* of the *sacrament* of penance, whereas it is a *fruit* of the *virtue* of penance.

Reply to objection 4: According to Dionysius in *De Divinis Nomenibus*, chap. 4, more things are required for the good, which arises "from an integrated cause," than for the bad, which arises "from each defect." And so even if a sin is brought to completion in the consent of the heart, nonetheless, what is required for the completion of penance are (a) contrition in the heart, (b) confessing with the mouth, and (c) making satisfaction by a deed.

Reply to the argument for the contrary: The reply to the argument for the contrary is clear from what has been said.

Article 3

Are the three acts just mentioned the *integral* parts of penance?

It seems that the three acts just mentioned are not the *integral* parts of penance (*praedicta tria non sint partes integrales poenitentiae*):

Objection 1: As has been said (q. 84, a. 2), penance is ordered against sin. But *sins of the heart*, *sins of the mouth*, and *sins of deed* are the *subjective* parts of sin and not the *integral* parts, since *sin* is predicated of each of them. Therefore, in the case of penance, *contrition of the heart*, *confession of the mouth*, and *satisfaction by deed* are likewise not the *integral* parts.

Objection 2: No integral part contains within itself another thing from which it is mutually divided. But *contrition* contains *confession* and *satisfaction* in its intention. Therefore, the three acts in question are not integral parts.

Objection 3: A whole is constituted from its integral parts taken together and equal to one another, in the way that a line is constituted from its parts. But this does not happen in the present case. Therefore, the three acts in question are not the *integral* parts of penance.

But contrary to this: What are called *integral* parts are such that a complete whole is made up of them. But the complete whole of penance is made up of the three acts in question. Therefore, they are the *integral* parts of penance.

I respond: Some have claimed that the three acts in question are the *subjective parts* of penance.

But this cannot be the case. For the *entire power* of the whole is simultaneously and equally present to each of its subjective parts—in the way that the whole power of *animal*, as *animal*, is preserved in each of *animal's* species, which simultaneously and equally divide [the genus] *animal*. But this is not true in the case under discussion.

And so others have claimed that the three acts in question are the *potential parts* of penance. But, again, this cannot be the case. For the whole, according to its *whole essence*, is present to each of its potential parts—in the way that the whole essence of the soul is present to each of its powers. But this is not true in the case under discussion.

Hence, what remains is that the three acts in question are penance's *integral parts*, the notion of which demands not that the whole be present to each of its parts either according to its whole *power* or according to its whole *essence*, but instead demands that the whole be present to all the parts taken together.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (a. 2, ad 4), since sin has the character of something bad, it can be brought to completion in just one thing. And that is why sin that is brought to completion in the heart alone is one species of sin. But a second species is sin that is brought to completion in the heart and the mouth, whereas a third species is sin that is brought to completion in the heart [and the mouth] and a deed. And the integral parts, as it were, of this last species of sin are what exists in the heart and what exists in the mouth and what exists in the deed. And that is why penance, which is brought to completion in the three acts mentioned above, has the three integral parts in question.

Reply to objection 2: A single integral part can contain the whole, though not according to its *essence*. For the foundation in a certain sense *virtually* contains the whole edifice. And it is in this way that contrition *virtually* contains the whole of penance.

Reply to objection 3: All *integral parts* have a sort of ordering with respect to one another:

Some have an ordering only with respect to *position*, whether (a) they are related as *a sequence*, like the parts of an army; or (b) *by contact*, like the parts of a pile; or (c) *by being fitted together*, like the parts of a house; or (d) *by being continuous*, like the parts of a line.

On the other hand, some have, in addition, an ordering of *power*, like the parts of an animal, of which the heart is the first in power, and the other parts depend on one another in a certain ordering of power.

In a third way, they are ordered by a *temporal* ordering, like the parts of time and the parts of a movement.

Accordingly, the parts of penance have an ordering of *power* and *time* with respect to one another, since they are *acts*, but not an ordering of position, since they have no position.

Article 4

Is penance appropriately divided into penance before baptism, penance with respect to mortal sins, and penance with respect to venial sins?

It seems that penance is not appropriately divided into penance before baptism, penance with respect to mortal sins, and penance with respect to venial sins (*inconvenienter dividatur poenitentia in poenitentiam ante baptismum, et poenitentiam mortalium, et poenitentiam venialium*):

Objection 1: As was noted above (q. 84, a. 6), penance is "the second plank after a shipwreck," whereas baptism is the first plank. Therefore, what exists before baptism should not be posited as a

species of penance.

Objection 2: What can destroy something greater can likewise destroy something lesser. But mortal sin is greater than venial sin, and the penance that has to do with mortal sins is the same as the penance that has to do with venial sin. Therefore, diverse species of penance should not be posited.

Objection 3: Just as an individual commits both mortal sins and venial sins after baptism, so also before baptism. Therefore, if penance with respect to venial sins is distinguished from penance with respect to mortal sin after baptism, then by parity of reasoning they should be distinguished before baptism. Therefore, it is not appropriate for penance to be divided into the species in question.

But contrary to this: In *De Poenitentia* Augustine posits these three species of penance.

I respond: The division under discussion is a division of penance insofar as it is virtue. Now consider that every virtue operates according to temporal congruence, just as it operates according to other due circumstances. Hence, the virtue of penance has its act in the present time insofar as it befits the New Law.

Now it belongs to penance that one's past sins should be detested, along with the intention of changing one's life for the better—which is, as it were, the end of penance. And since, as was established in the Second Part (*ST* 1-2, q. 1, a. 3 and q. 18, a. 6), moral matters take their species from the end, it follows that diverse species of penance are taken from the diverse changes that the penitent intends.

Now there are three changes intended by the penitent: The first change is through rebirth into a new life; and this belongs to the *penance which occurs before baptism*. The second change is through the reformation of his now corrupted past life; and this belongs to *penance with respect to mortal sins* committed after baptism. The third change is toward a more perfect way of living his life; and this belongs to *penance with respect to venial sins*, which, as was explained above (q, 87, aa. 2-3), are remitted through a fervent act of charity.

Reply to objection 1: The penance that occurs before baptism is not a sacrament, but is instead an act of virtue that disposes an individual for the sacrament of baptism.

Reply to objection 2: The penance that erases mortal sins likewise erases venial sins, but not vice versa. And so these two sorts of penance are related as the complete and the incomplete.

Reply to objection 3: Before baptism venial sins do not exist without mortal sins. And since, as was explained above (q. 87, a. 4), venial sin cannot be remitted without [existent] mortal sin being remitted. That is why, before baptism, penance with respect to mortal sins is not distinguished from penance with respect to venial sins.

Note: Here St. Thomas stopped writing. Later on, the *Supplement*, extracted in its entirety from the fourth book of his early *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, was added to fill out the topics which he had proposed to cover in the Prologue to the Third Part.