Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

194 Penance Concerning penance note (*Penitencia Circa penitentiam nota*)

Penance. Concerning penance, note its integral parts, its virtual arts, and its figural praises.

¶ Penance is compared certainly to three things. For it is like water against dogs, like clamor against thieves, and like arms against enemies.

¶ Concerning the first, note that hot water ejects a dog from the kitchen, so the water of tears ejects the demon from the soul. In the figure of which it is said in Gen. 36[:24] that “Ana who found first the hot waters in the wilderness.” Explain there, wherefore Ambrose,[[1]](#endnote-1) the tears wash away the transgression, because shame is the voice to be confessed.

¶ Again, penance is compared to a tree whose root is contrition, leaves are confession, flowers are devotion, fruits are the works of this kind diffused by grace.

¶ Second penance is like clamor against thieves as far as confession. In the figure of which, it is said 1 Macc. 3[:6]: “For fear” of Judas who is interpreted as confession “his enemies were driven away.”

¶ Third, penance is as if arms against enemies as far as satisfaction, 2 Cor. 10[:4]: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” Concerning alms, it is said in Eccli. 29[:16-17]: “Better than the shield of the mighty, and better than the spear, it shall fight against.”

¶ Again penance is perturbation like the sea. Otherwise, it will not drive from you the envious. Whereas it is said there, [Lam. 2:13]: “Great as the sea is your destruction.” Again, able to be kindled like fire because it draws out the smoke of contrition from green wood, that is, from sinners, Psal. [118:136]: “My eyes have sent forth springs of water.” But like green wood they burn more forcefully when they are kindled, so sinners when they repent, they love more forcefully, Luke 7[:47]: “To whom much is forgiven he loves much.” But many do not find “fire but thick water,”

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as it is said in 2 Mach. 1[:20]. Namely they who do not cultivate a pure life for grinding but for loving.

¶ Third penance is enclosing like a hedge. For like a farmer with his thorns which withdraw either from the field or the vine, shuts the vine against pigs and other beasts. So, the penitent thinking over his sins which he tore away through confession ought to provide against temptations, Eccli. 36[:27]: “Where there is no hedge, the possession shall be spoiled.”

¶ Again penance is like a key which when move locks and unlocks a door. For the mind by the soul’s own movement locks in the sin, locks against itself the door of heaven, but by a contrary motion, that is, of penance by which it withdraws from sin unlocks the door of heaven, Matt. 3[:2]: “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Rom. 6[:22]: “But now being made free from sin,” through penance, “and become servants to God,” through obedience, “you have fruit unto sanctification,” through grace, “and the end life everlasting,” through glory, Ezech. 18[:21]: “If the wicked do penance,” etc.

¶ Again penance is discretely imposed, devoutly undertaken, and perfectly implemented. Concerning the first, as poison is life to a serpent, death to a man. Fire tests gold, but burns up a shrub. A mole lives under the earth dies in the light. Man under water dies where fish delight. So, each penance is imposed on all. For it is said, Lev. 13[:44] et 14[:2], that the priest ought to discern between leprosy and leprosy.

¶ Second, penance is to be assumed devoutly just as a soldier does his arms, a horse his burden, a pilgrim his staff, Psal. [72:23]: “I am become as a beast before you.”

¶ Third, that it be perfectly implemented, so that not only sin itself be avoided, but also the sliding back of sin, the occasions, and opportunities. For grass cut with a scythe revives, but not thus the grass rooted out. Therefore, says Augustine,[[2]](#endnote-2) that penance excises the causes of sins.

¶ Again true penitents are like the bird who puts himself between the brambles and the thorns lest they be captured by the bird catcher of hell, Can. 2[:2]: “As the lily among thorns, so is my love.”

¶ Second he follows Christ. For penance is the way that Christ walked, Luke 4[:2]. And the first teaching which Christ preached, Matt. 4[:2]. But many wish to follow Christ in prosperous matters

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but not in the adversities of penance. They wish to reign with Christ in heaven, not to contend by his side in the stadium. Wherefore it is said to the sons of Zebedee, Matt. 20[:22]: “You know not what you ask.”

¶ Again thirdly he spurns the prosperous things of the world against some who are like those of Vesuvius, he spurns the nucleus inside on account of love of the exterior skin. Therefore, it is said in Heb. 12[:11]: “All chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy, but sorrow.” Concerning the fourth he seeks heaven like a boy who tears his old clothes that he more quickly may acquire a garment of happiness, Psal. [29:12]: “You have cut my sackcloth,” etc.

1. Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam* 10.88 (PL 15:1825): Lavent lacrymae delictum, quod voce pudor est confiteri.

Decretum, Causa 33, De poenitentia, quest. 3, dist. 1, c. 2: Lacrimae lavent delictum, quod \*voce\* pudor est confiteri. [juxta illud Ambrosii super Lucam, ad cap. 22.] [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, see Thomas Aquinas, *Sentences Commentary*, 4. d. 15, q. 1, a. 1, qu. 3: Ulterius. Videtur quod definitio satisfactionis in littera inconvenienter ponatur ab Augustino. Dicit enim quod *satisfactio est peccatorum causas excidere, et eorum suggestionibus aditum non indulgere*. Causa enim actualis peccati fomes est. Sed in hac vita non possumus fomitem excidere. Ergo satisfacere non est causas peccatorum excidere. [Sent.IV.D15.Q1.A1.Q2.5 - Aquinas](https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.IV.D15.Q1.A1.Q2.5) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)