Catechism for the Week of August 21- August 27, 2016

QUESTION 13: Can we ourselves make this Satisfaction?
ANSWER: Certainly not; on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.

EXPOSITION: Having given an explanation of the manner in which our Deliverance is accomplished, we must now inquire by whom this Satisfaction, and abolishing of sin can be effected: whether by ourselves, or by someone else? And if by someone else, whether it be by a mere creature? And if not by a mere creature, by whom, therefore, and by what kind of a Mediator?

The first of these questions is answered in this 13th Question of the Catechism. The other two are answered in the 14th and 15th Questions of the Catechism. We cannot make this Satisfaction by and of ourselves, neither by Obedience nor by Punishment.

We cannot make it by Obedience, because whatever Good we perform we owe to God by present obligation. Hence it is impossible for us to satisfy for our past offences by any present obedience which we may render to the Law of God, for we cannot deserve anything at the Hands of God for the present, much less for the time to come; neither can a double merit, that is to say, a merit for the present and the future, proceed from one satisfaction.

A more common and popular reason is assigned in the Catechism: because we daily increase our debt. We sin continually, and in sinning we increase our guilt and the displeasure of God towards us. Now he who never ceases to offend can never appease the party offended, just as a debtor who continually adds new accounts to former claims can never release himself from debt. Neither can we make Satisfaction to God for our sins by Punishment, because our guilt being infinite, deserves an Infinite Punishment—one that is eternal, or that is equivalent to Everlasting Punishment.

Sin being an offence against the highest Good, deserves Eternal Condemnation, or at least such a Temporal Punishment as is equivalent to that which is eternal. But we cannot make Satisfaction by a Punishment that is eternal, because then we should never be freed from it. We would always be making Satisfaction to the Justice of God, and yet it would never be fully satisfied. Our Satisfaction would never be perfect—it would never be a complete Victory over Sin and Death, but would continue imperfect to all eternity, as the Satisfaction of devils and wicked spirits.

Nor can we make Satisfaction by enduring such a Temporal Punishment as will be equivalent to that which is eternal, which is necessary in order that Death may be overcome. Such a Punishment as this cannot be endured by any mere creature, on account of many imperfections, as we shall presently show.

As we cannot, therefore, make Satisfaction by ourselves, there is a necessity that this Satisfaction should be made by Another, if we would obtain Deliverance from our Misery.

From this we may readily return an Answer to the following **Objection**, which is sometimes made: We can never satisfy the Law, neither by Punishment nor Obedience. Therefore, the method of Deliverance through Satisfaction is of no account.
Answer: It is not of small account; because although we are not able to make Satisfaction through Obedience, we are, nevertheless, able to make it through the endurance of a Sufficient Punishment, not in ourselves, but in Christ, Who has satisfied the Law both by Obedience and Punishment. Against this the following objections have been urged:

Objection 1: The Law requires our own Obedience or Punishment; because it is written: **"He that does these things shall live by them." "Cursed be he that confirms not all the words," etc.**
Answer: The Law does indeed require our Obedience or Punishment, but not exclusively, for it never excludes or condemns the Satisfaction of Another in our behalf, although it does not teach it, and is ignorant of it. But the Gospel reveals and shows this unto us in Christ.

Objection 2: It is unjust to punish Another in the place of the guilty. Therefore Christ could not be punished in our room and stead.
Answer: It is not inconsistent with the Justice of God that Another should be punished in the place of those who are guilty, if these conditions are present.

1. If He Who is punished be innocent.
2. If He be of the same nature with those for whom He makes Satisfaction.
3. If He, of His Own accord, offer Himself as a Satisfaction.
4. If He Himself be able to endure and come forth from this Punishment.

(This is the reason why men cannot punish one person in the place of another, because they cannot bring it to pass that the one that suffers should not perish under the Punishment.)

5. If He look to, and obtain the End which Christ had in view, viz.: the Glory of God and the Salvation of Man.