

3

Lectio 1

1 ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν φαρισαίων, Νικόδημος ὄνομα αὐτῶ, ἀρχῶν τῶν Ἰουδαίων: 2 οὗτος ἦλθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ, ῥαββί, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐλήλυθας διδάσκαλος: οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, ἐὰν μὴ ἦ ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτοῦ. 3 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῶ, ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. 4 λέγει πρὸς αὐτὸν [ὁ] Νικόδημος, πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέροντων; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δευτέρου εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι; 5 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. 6 τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστιν.

LECTURE 1

1 There was a certain Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one could perform the signs you perform, unless he had God with him." 3 Jesus responded and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born again when he is already an old man? Is it possible for him to return to his mother's womb and be born all over again?" 5 Jesus replied, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 What is born of flesh is itself flesh; and what is born of Spirit is itself spirit."

Supra ostendit Evangelista virtutem Christi quantum ad mutationem naturae; hic vero ostendit eam quantum ad reformationem gratiae, de qua principaliter intendit. Reformatio autem gratiae fit per spiritualem generationem, et per beneficiorum regeneratis collationem. Primo ergo tractat de spirituali generatione; secundo de beneficiorum spiritualium regeneratis divinitus collatione; et hoc in V cap. ibi *post haec erat dies festus Iudaeorum et cetera*.

Circa primum duo facit. Primo agit de spirituali regeneratione quantum ad Iudaeos; secundo de propagatione fructuum huius regenerationis etiam quantum ad externas nationes. Et hoc in IV cap. ibi *ut ergo cognovit Iesus, quia audierunt Pharisei et cetera*. Circa primum duo facit. Primo manifestat spiritualem regenerationem verbis; secundo implet eam factis, ibi *post haec venit Iesus, et discipuli eius in terram Iudaeam et cetera*.

Circa primum tria facit. Primo ostendit spiritualis regenerationis necessitatem; secundo eius qualitatem, ibi *dicit ad eum Nicodemus: quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex?* Tertio eius modum et rationem, ibi *respondit ad eum Nicodemus, et dixit ei: quomodo possunt haec fieri?* Circa primum duo facit. Primo ostendit demonstrandae necessitatis occasionem; secundo necessitatem huius regenerationis, ibi *respondit Iesus, et dixit ei: amen, amen dico tibi et cetera*.

Occasio autem huius necessitatis inducitur ex Nicodemo; et ideo dicit *erat autem homo ex Phariseis, Nicodemus nomine et cetera*. Quem describit ex persona, ex tempore, et ex confessione ipsius.

Ex persona quidem describitur quantum ad tria. Scilicet quantum ad religionem, quia Phariseus; unde dicit *erat homo ex Phariseis*. Duplex namque secta erat apud Iudaeos, scilicet Phariseorum et Sadducaeorum. Sed Pharisei magis conveniebant nobiscum in opinionibus, quia credebant resurrectionem et dicebant esse creaturas aliquas spirituales. Sadducaeii vero magis discordabant,

423 Above, the Evangelist showed Christ's power in relation to changes affecting nature; here he shows it in relation to our reformation by grace, which is his principal subject. Reformation by grace comes about through spiritual generation and by the conferring of benefits on those regenerated. First, then, he treats of spiritual generation. Secondly, of the spiritual benefits divinely conferred on the regenerated, and this in chapter five.

As to the first he does two things. First, he treats of spiritual regeneration in relation to the Jews. Secondly, of the spreading of the fruits of this regeneration even to foreign peoples, and this in chapter four. Concerning the first he does two things. First, he explains spiritual regeneration with words. Secondly, he completes it with deeds (3:22).

As to the first he does three things. First, he shows the need for a spiritual regeneration. Secondly, its quality (3:4). Thirdly, its mode and nature (3:9). As to the first he does two things. First, he mentions the occasion for showing this need. Secondly, the need itself for this regeneration (3:3).

The occasion was presented by Nicodemus; hence he says, **There was a certain Pharisee named Nicodemus**. And he describes him as to his person, from the time, and from his statements.

424 he describes his person in three ways. First, as to his religion, because he was a Pharisee, hence he says, **There was a certain Pharisee**. For there were two sects among the Jews: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were closer to us in their beliefs, for they believed in the resurrection, and admitted the existence of spiritual creatures. The Sadducees, on the other hand, disagree more

quia nec resurrectionem futuram, nec spiritum esse credebant. Et dicebantur isti Pharisei, quasi ab aliis divisi. Et quia opinio eorum probabilior erat, et magis propinqua veritati, ideo Nicodemus facilius conversus est ad Christum. Act. XXVI, 5: *secundum certissimam sectam religionis nostrae* et cetera.

Item quantum ad nomen, cum dicit *Nicodemus nomine*: quod interpretatur victor, seu victoria populi, per quem significantur illi qui ex Iudaeis ad Christum conversi, fide vicerunt mundum. I Io. ult., 4: *haec est victoria, quae vincit mundum, fides nostra*.

Item tertio, quantum ad dignitatem; unde dicit *princeps Iudaeorum*. A principio namque licet dominus non elegerit sapientes, potentes, aut nobiles, ne virtus fidei sapientiae et potentiae humanae attribueretur ut dicitur I Cor. I, 26: *non multi sapientes, secundum carnem, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles, sed quae stulta sunt mundi eligit Deus*, voluit tamen aliquos sapientes et potentes a principio ad se convertere, ne si doctrina sua solum ab ignobilibus et insipientibus reciperetur, haberetur contemptui, et ne credentium multitudo potius attribueretur rusticitati, et insipientiae conversorum, quam virtuti fidei. Nihilominus tamen voluit istos nobiles et potentes non multos esse ad eum conversos, ne ut dictum est humanae potentiae, aut sapientiae ascriberetur. Et ideo dicitur Io. XII, 42, quod *aliqui ex principibus crediderunt in eum*: inter quos fuit iste Nicodemus; Ps. XLVI, 10: *principes populorum congregati sunt*.

Ex tempore vero describit eum, cum dicit *hic venit ad Iesum nocte* et cetera. Circa quod sciendum est, quod qualitas temporis consuevit in Scriptura describi circa aliquos, ad insinuandam cognitionem mentis, seu conditionem actionis eorum. Describitur autem hic tempus istud obscurum, unde dicit *venit nocte*. Nox enim obscura est, et competebat qualitati affectus Nicodemi, qui non cum securitate et

with us, for they believed neither in the resurrection to come nor in the existence of spirits. The former were called Pharisees, as being separated from the others. And because their opinion was the more credible and nearer to the truth, it was easier for Nicodemus to be converted to Christ. “I lived as a Pharisee, according to the strictest sect of our religion” (Acts 26:5).

425 As to his name he says, **named Nicodemus**, which means “victor,” or “the victory of the people.” This signifies those who overcame the world through faith by being converted to Christ from Judaism. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4).

426 Thirdly, as to his rank he says, a **member of the Sanhedrin**. For although our Lord did not choose the wise or powerful or those of high birth at the beginning, lest the power of the faith be attributed to human wisdom and power—“Not many of you are learned in the worldly sense, not many powerful, not many of high birth. But God chose the simple ones of the world” (1 Cor 1:26)—still he willed to convert some of the wise and powerful to himself at the very beginning. And he did this so that his doctrine would not be held in contempt, as being accepted exclusively by the lowly and uneducated, and so that the number of believers would not be attributed to the rusticity and ignorance of the converts rather than to the power of the faith. However, he did not will that a large number of those converted to him be powerful and of high birth, lest, as has been said, it should be ascribed to human power and wisdom. And so it says, “many of those in authority believed in him” (below 12:42), among whom was this Nicodemus. “The rulers of the people have come together” (Ps 46:10).

427 Then he describes him as to the time, saying, **he came to Jesus at night**. In regard to this, it might be noted that in Scripture the quality of the time is mentioned as to certain persons in order to indicate their knowledge or the condition of their actions. Here an obscure time is mentioned, **at night**. For the night is obscure and suited to the state of mind of Nicodemus, who did not come to Jesus free of care and

libera propalatione, sed cum timore ad Iesum veniebat; nam erat de illis principibus, de quibus dicitur Io. XII, 42 quod *crediderunt in eum; sed propter Phariseos non confitebantur, ut de synagoga non eicerentur*. Non enim perfecte diligebant; unde subditur: *dilexerunt enim magis gloriam hominum quam gloriam Dei*.

Competit etiam nox eius ignorantiae, et imperfectae cognitioni, quam iste habebat de Christo; Rom. XIII, 12: *nox praecessit* etc.; Ps. LXXXI, 5: *nescierunt, neque intellexerunt, in tenebris ambulant*.

Ex confessione vero describitur, cum subdit *et dixit ei: Rabbi, scimus quia a Deo venisti magister*. Ubi confitetur Christi officium in docendo, cum dicit *Rabbi*, etc. et eius potestatem in agendo, ibi *nemo enim potest haec signa facere quae tu facis, nisi fuerit Deus cum eo*. Et quidem in utroque verum dicit, licet parum confessus est.

Verum enim est quod vocat eum *Rabbi*, idest magister, quia, ut dicitur infra XIII, 13: *vos vocatis me magister, et domine, et bene dicitis, sum etenim*. Legerat enim Nicodemus quod scriptum est Ioel II, 23: *filiis Sion, exultate, et laetamini in domino Deo vestro, quia dedit vobis doctorem iustitiae*. Sed parum dicit, quia dicit eum a Deo venisse magistrum sed tacet eum Deum esse. Nam venire a Deo magister, commune est omnibus bonis praelatis, Ier. III, 15, *et dabo vobis pastores iuxta cor meum; et pascent vos scientia, et doctrina*; unde hoc non est singulare Christo: quamquam aliter doceant homines, aliter Christus. Alii enim magistri docent tantum exterius, sed Christus etiam interius, quia, ut dicitur supra I, 9, *erat lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem*: et ideo ipse solus dat sapientiam; Lc. XXI, 15: *ego dabo vobis os et sapientiam*. Et hoc nullus purus homo dicere potest.

anxiety, but in fear; for he was one of those of whom it is said that they "believed in him; but they did not admit it because of the Pharisees, so that they would not be expelled from the synagogue" (below 12:42). For their love was not perfect, so it continues, "For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God."

Further, night was appropriate to his ignorance and the imperfect understanding he had of Christ: "The night has passed, and day is at hand. So let us cast-off the works of darkness" (Rom 13:12); "They have not known or understood; they are walking in darkness" (Ps 81:5).

428 Then he is described from his statements, when he says that Nicodemus said to Jesus: **Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God**. Here he affirms Christ's office as teacher when he says, **Rabbi**, and his power of acting, saying, **for no one could perform the signs you perform, unless he had God with him**. And in both remarks he says what is true, but he does not affirm enough.

He is right in calling Jesus **Rabbi**, i.e., Teacher, because, "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you do well, for so I am," as we read below (13:13). For Nicodemus had read what was written in Joel (2:23): "Children of Sion, rejoice, and be joyful in the Lord your God, because he has given you a teacher of justice." But he says too little, because he says that Jesus came as a teacher from God, but is silent on whether he is God. For to come as a teacher from God is common to all good prelates: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and doctrine," as it says in Jeremiah (3:15). Therefore, this is not unique to Christ even though Christ taught in a manner unlike other men. For some teachers teach only from without, but Christ also instructs within, because "He was the true light, which enlightens every man" (above 1:9); thus he alone gives wisdom: "I will give you an eloquence and a wisdom" (Lk 21:15), and this is something that no mere man can say.

Potestatem vero confitetur ex signis visis, quasi dicat: credo quod a *Deo venisti magister*, quia *nemo potest haec signa facere*. Et verum dicit, quia signa quae Christus fecit, non possunt fieri nisi divinitus, et quia Deus cum eo erat; infra VIII, v. 29: *qui me misit, mecum est*. Sed parum dicit, quia credebat quod Christus non propria potestate signa faceret, quasi indigens extranea virtute, ac si Deus non esset cum eo per unitatem essentiae, sed per infusionem gratiae solum. Quod quidem falsum est, quia non extranea virtute, sed propria, signa faciebat: nam eadem est potestas Dei et Christi. Simile est quod dicit mulier Eliae, III Reg. XVII, 24: *in hoc facto cognovi quoniam vir Dei es tu*.

Consequenter cum dicit *respondit Iesus, et dixit ei* etc. ponit necessitatem spiritualis regenerationis provenientem ex ignorantia Nicodemi. Et ideo dicit *amen, amen*. Ubi notandum est, quod haec dictio *amen* est Hebraea, qua frequenter Christus usus est: unde ob eius reverentiam nullus translator, tam Graecorum quam Latinorum, transferre voluit. Et quandoque quidem significat idem quod verum, aut idem quod vere; quandoque vero idem quod fiat. Unde in Ps. LXXI, LXXXVIII et CVI, ubi nos habemus, *fiat*, in Hebraeo est *amen, amen*. Sed hanc dictionem solus Ioannes Evangelista ingeminat inter Evangelistas. Cuius ratio est, quia alii Evangelistae ea principaliter tradunt quae ad humanitatem Christi pertinent: ad quae, cum facilius credibilia sint, minor assertio necessaria erat; Ioannes vero ea quae ad divinitatem Christi pertinent, principaliter tractat, quae, cum occulta sint, et a cognitione hominum remota, maiori assertione indigebant.

Deinde attendendum est, quod haec responsio Christi videtur omnino inconsona propositis a Nicodemo, nisi diligenter consideretur. Quomodo namque convenire videtur quod dixit Nicodemus *Rabbi, scimus quia a Deo venisti*, cum hoc quod respondit dominus *nisi quis renatus fuerit denuo, non potest videre regnum Dei?*

429 He affirms his power because of the signs he saw. As if to say: I believe that you have come as a teacher from God, **for no one could perform the signs you perform**. And he is speaking the truth, because the signs which Christ did cannot be worked except by God, and because God was with him: "He who sent me is with me" (below 8:29). But he says too little, because he believed that Christ did not perform these signs through his own power, but as relying on the power of another; as though God were not with him by a unity of essence but merely by an infusion of grace. But this is false, because Christ performed these signs not by an exterior power but by his own; for the power of God and of Christ is one and the same. It is similar to what the woman says to Elijah: "Because of this I know that you are a man of God" (1 Kgs 17:24).

430 Then when he says that Jesus answered, **Amen, amen, I say to you**, he sets down the necessity for spiritual regeneration, because of the ignorance of Nicodemus. And so he says, **Amen, amen**. Here we should note that this word, **amen**, is a Hebrew word frequently employed by Christ; hence out of reverence for him no Greek or Latin translator wanted to translate it. Sometimes it means the same as "true" or "truly"; and sometimes the same as "so be it." Thus is the Psalms 71 (v 19), 88 (v 53), and 106, where we have, "So be it, so be it," the Hebrew has "Amen, amen." But John is the only Evangelist who duplicates or makes a twin use of this word. The reason for this is that the other Evangelists are concerned mainly with matters pertaining to the humanity of Christ, which, since they are easier to believe, need less reinforcement; but John deals chiefly with things pertaining to the divinity of Christ, and these, since they are hidden and remote from men's knowledge and experience, require greater formal declaration.

431 Next we should point out that at first glance this answer of Christ seems to be entirely foreign to Nicodemus' statement. For what connection is there between Nicodemus' statement, **Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God**, and the Lord's reply, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**.

Sed notandum, sicut iam dictum est, quod Nicodemus imperfectam opinionem habens de Christo, confitebatur eum magistrum et haec signa facere tamquam hominem purum. Vult ergo ei dominus ostendere, quomodo ad altiores cognitionem de ipso posset pervenire. Et quidem poterat de hoc dominus disputare; sed quia hoc fuisset verum in contentionem, cuius contrarium de eo scriptum est Is. XLII, 2: *non contendet*, ideo cum mansuetudine voluit eum ad veram cognitionem perducere, quasi diceret: non mirum si me purum hominem credis, quia illa secreta divinitatis non potest aliquis scire, nisi adeptus fuerit spiritualem regenerationem. Et hoc est quod dicit *nisi quis natus fuerit denuo, non potest videre regnum Dei*.

Ubi sciendum, quod cum visio sit actus vitae, secundum diversas vitas, diversae sunt visiones. Nam est quaedam vita carnalis, qua communiter omnia alia vivunt, et haec habet carnalem visionem, seu cognitionem. Est et vita spiritualis, qua homo conformatur Deo et spiritibus sanctis, et haec habet spiritualem visionem. Secundum carnalem quidem spiritualia videri non possunt; I Cor. c. II, 14: *animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus Dei*, sed percipiuntur visione spirituali; unde ibidem subditur *quae Dei sunt, nemo novit nisi spiritus Dei*. Spiritus autem est qui regenerat; unde apostolus Rom. VIII, v. 15: *non accepistis spiritum servitutis iterum in timore; sed accepistis spiritum adoptionis*. Et hunc quidem spiritum per regenerationem spiritualem accipimus. Ad Tit. III, 5: *salvos nos fecit per lavacrum regenerationis spiritus sancti*. Si ergo visio spiritualis non est nisi per spiritum sanctum, et spiritus sanctus infunditur nobis per lavacrum regenerationis spiritualis: ergo non possumus videre regnum Dei, nisi per lavacrum regenerationis, et ideo dicit *nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei*. Quasi dicat: non est mirum si non vides regnum Dei, quia nullus illud videre potest nisi accipiat spiritum sanctum, per quem renascitur in filium Dei.

Ad regnum autem non solum pertinet regale solium, sed etiam quae sunt ad regni gubernationem, scilicet regia dignitas, beneficia

But we should note, as has already been stated, that Nicodemus, having an imperfect opinion about Christ, affirmed that he was a teacher and performed these signs as a mere man. And so the Lord wishes to show Nicodemus how he might arrive at a deeper understanding of him. And as a matter of fact, the Lord might have done so with an argument, but because this might have resulted in a quarrel—the opposite of which was prophesied about him: “He will not quarrel” (Is 42:2)—he wished to lead him to a true understanding with gentleness. As if to say: It is not strange that you regard me as a mere man, because one cannot know these secrets of the divinity unless he has achieved a spiritual regeneration. And this is what he says: **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

432 Here we should point out that since vision is an act of life, then according to the diverse kinds of life there will be diversity of vision. For there is a sentient life which some living things share in common, and this life has a sentient vision or knowledge. And there is also a spiritual life, by which man is made like God and other holy spirits; and this life enjoys a spiritual vision. Now spiritual things cannot be seen by the sentient: “The sensual man does not perceive those things that pertain to the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14), but they are perceived by the spiritual vision: “No one knows the things of God but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:11). So the apostle says: “You did not receive the spirit of slavery, putting you in fear again, but the spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15). And we receive this spirit through a spiritual regeneration: “He saved us by the cleansing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit” (Ti 3:3). Therefore, if spiritual vision comes only through the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit is given through a cleansing of spiritual regeneration, then it is only by a cleansing of regeneration that we can see the kingdom of God. Thus he says, **unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** As if to say: It is not surprising if you do not see the kingdom of God, because no one can see it unless he receives the Holy Spirit, through whom one is reborn a son of God.

433 It is not only the royal throne that pertains to a kingdom, but also the things needed for governing the kingdom, such as the royal dignity,

gratiarum et via iustitiae, qua solidatur regnum, et ideo dicit *non potest videre regnum Dei*, idest gloriam et dignitatem Dei, idest mysteria salutis aeternae, quae per fidei iustitiam inspiciuntur; Rom. XIV, 17: *regnum Dei non est esca et potus*.

In veteri autem lege fuit quaedam regeneratio spiritualis, sed imperfecta et figuralis; I Cor. X, 2: *omnes in Moyse baptizati sunt, in nube et in mari*; idest, in figura Baptismum acceperunt. Et ideo mysteria regni Dei videbant quidem, sed figuraliter tantum; Hebr. c. XI, 13: *a longe aspicientes*. In nova vero lege est manifesta regeneratio spiritualis, sed tamen est imperfecta, quia renovamur interius tantum per gratiam, sed non exterius per incorruptionem; II Cor. IV, 16: *licet is qui foris est noster homo corrumpatur, tamen is qui intus est renovatur de die in diem*. Et ideo videmus regnum Dei et mysteria salutis aeternae, sed imperfecte, quia, ut dicitur I Cor. XIII, 12, *videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate* et cetera. In patria vero est perfecta regeneratio, quia renovabimur interius et exterius. Et ideo regnum Dei perfectissime videbimus; unde I Cor. XIII, 12: *tunc autem videbimus facie ad faciem*; et I Io. III, 2: *cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, quia videbimus eum sicuti est*.

Patet ergo quod sicut visionem corporalem non habet quis nisi natus, ita nec spiritualem habere potest nisi renatus. Et secundum triplicem regenerationem est triplex modus visionis.

Nota autem, quod in Graeco non habetur denuo, sed *another*, idest desuper, quod Hieronymus transtulit *denuo*, ut scilicet importet additionem. Et sic Hieronymus intellexit dicens *nisi renatus fuerit denuo*; quasi dicat: nisi renatus iterato per supernaturalem generationem.

royal favors, and the way of justice by which the kingdom is consolidated. Hence he says, **he cannot see the kingdom of God**, i.e., the glory and dignity of God, i.e., the mysteries of eternal salvation which are seen through the justice of faith: "The kingdom of God is not food and drink" (Rom 14:17).

Now in the Old Law there was a spiritual regeneration; but it was imperfect and symbolic: "All were baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2), i.e., they received baptism in symbol. Accordingly, they did see the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but only symbolically: "seeing from afar" (Heb 11:13). But in the New Law there is an evident spiritual regeneration, although imperfect, because we are renewed only inwardly by grace, but not outwardly by incorruption: "Although our outward nature is wasting away, yet our inward nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). And so we do see the kingdom of God and the mysteries of eternal salvation, but imperfectly, for as it says, "Now we see in a mirror, in an obscure manner" (1 Cor 13:12). But there is perfect regeneration in heaven, because we will be renewed both inwardly and outwardly. And therefore we shall see the kingdom of God in a most perfect way: "But then we will see face to face," as is said in 1 Corinthians (13:12); and "When he appears we will be like him, because we will see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).

434 It is clear, therefore, that just as one does not have bodily vision unless he is born, so one cannot have spiritual vision unless he is reborn. And according to the threefold regeneration, there is a threefold kind of vision.

435 Note that the Greek reading is not "again," but *another*, i.e., "from above," which Jerome translated as "again," in order to suggest addition. And this is the way Jerome understood the saying, **unless one is born again**. It is as if he were saying: Unless one is reborn once more through a fraternal generation.

Chrysostomus autem dicit, nasci desuper, esse proprium filii Dei, quia ipse solus natus est desuper; infra (hoc cap.) *qui desursum venit, super omnes est*. Et dicitur Christus nasci desuper quantum ad tempus (ut ita liceat loqui) quia ab aeterno genitus; Ps. CIX, v. 3: *ante Luciferum genui te*. Et quantum ad generationis principium, quia a patre caelesti; infra VI, 38: *descendi, non ut faciam voluntatem meam, sed eius qui misit me*. Quia ergo nostra regeneratio est ad similitudinem filii Dei, secundum illud Rom. VIII, v. 29: *quos praescivit conformes fieri imaginis filii sui*, ideo, quia illa generatio superna est, et nostra generatio desuper est, quantum ad tempus, per aeternam praedestinationem, Eph. I, 4: *elegit nos in ipso ante mundi constitutionem*, et quantum ad donum Dei, infra VI, 44: *nemo potest venire ad me, nisi pater qui misit me, traxerit eum*. Eph. II, 5: *gratia Dei salvati estis* et cetera.

Consequenter cum dicit *dicit ad eum Nicodemus* etc., ponit modum, et rationem huius spiritualis regenerationis: et circa hoc primo ponitur dubitatio Nicodemi; secundo responsio Christi *respondit Iesus: amen, amen dico tibi* et cetera.

Circa primum sciendum est, quod, sicut dicitur I Cor. II, 14, *animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus Dei*, et ideo, quia Nicodemus carnalis adhuc et animalis erat, non potuit quae dicebantur, nisi carnaliter intelligere. Et ideo ea quae dominus dixerat de regeneratione spirituali, ipse de regeneratione carnali intelligebat. Et hoc est quod dicit *quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex?*

Ubi, secundum Chrysostomum, sciendum est, quod Nicodemus voluit obiicere contra verba salvatoris. Sed tamen obiectio eius derisibilis est, quia Christus loquitur de regeneratione spirituali, hic autem obiicit de carnali. Similiter omnes rationes inductae ad impugnandum ea

Chrysostom, however, says that to be “born from above” is peculiar to the Son of God, because he alone is born from above: “The one who came from above is above all things” (below 3:31). And Christ is said to be born from above both as to time (if we may speak thus), because he was begotten from eternity: “Before the daystar I begot you” (Ps 109:3), and as to the principle of his generation, because he proceeds from the heavenly Father: “I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (below 6:38). Therefore, because our regeneration is in the likeness of the Son of God, inasmuch as “Those whom he foreknew he predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29), and because that generation is from above, our generation also is from above: both as to the time, because of our eternal predestination, “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), and as to its being a gift of God, as we read below (6:44), “No one can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him”; and “You have been saved by the grace of God” (Eph 2:5).

436 Then when he says, **Nicodemus said to him**, he gives the manner of and the reason for this spiritual regeneration. First, the doubt of Nicodemus is set forth. Secondly, Christ’s response (v 5).

437 As to the first we should note that as stated in 1 Corinthians (2:14): “The sensual man does not perceive those things that pertain to the Spirit of God.” And so because Nicodemus was yet carnal and sensual, he was unable to grasp, except in a carnal manner, the things that were said to him. Consequently, what the Lord said to him about spiritual regeneration, he understood of carnal generation. And this is what he says: **How can a man be born again when he is already an old man?**

We should note here, according to Chrysostom, that Nicodemus wanted to object to what was said by the Savior. But his objection is foolish, because Christ was speaking of spiritual regeneration, and he is objecting in terms of carnal regeneration. In like manner, all the

quae sunt fidei, derisibiles sunt, quia non sunt secundum intentionem sacrae Scripturae.

Obiicit autem Nicodemus contra verba domini dupliciter, secundum quod dupliciter videbatur dictum domini impossibile, scilicet quod homo denuo renascatur. Uno modo scilicet propter irreversibilitatem humanae vitae: nam a senectute non potest homo redire ad pueritiam. Unde dicitur Iob XVI, v. 23: *semitam*, scilicet vitam praesentem, *per quam non revertar, ambulo*. Et secundum hoc dicit *quomodo potest homo nasci, cum sit senex?* Quasi dicat: numquid iterum efficietur puer ut renascatur? Iob VII, 10: *non revertetur ultra in domum suam, neque cognoscat eum amplius locus eius*. Secundo ex modo carnalis generationis: nam homo in principio cum generatur est in parva quantitate, ita ut possit eum uterus maternus capere; postmodum vero, cum iam natus est, ad continua crementa paulatim perducitur, ita ut non possit in materno utero contineri. Et ideo dicit *numquid potest in ventrem matris suae iterato introire, et renasci?* Quasi dicat, non, quia non capit eum venter.

Sed haec locum non habent in generatione spirituali, quia homo, quantumcumque per peccatum spiritualiter inveteratus, secundum illud Ps. XXXI, 3: *quoniam tacui, inveteraverunt omnia ossa mea*, potest per auxilium gratiae divinae ad novitatem venire, secundum illud Ps. CII, 5: *renovabitur ut aquilae iuventus tua*. Potest, et quantumcumque magnus, in uterum spiritualem, scilicet Ecclesiae, per sacramentum Baptismi introire. Quis autem sit uterus spiritualis, manifestum est; alias numquam diceretur: *ex utero ante Luciferum genui te*. Nihilominus tamen aliqualem similitudinem habet quod dicitur; nam, sicut homo semel carnaliter natus, non potest iterum nasci, ita et semel per Baptismum spiritualiter natus, non potest iterum nasci, quia non debet iterum baptizari; Eph. IV, 5: *unus dominus, una fides, unum Baptisma*.

reasons brought forth to attack the things of faith are foolish, since they are not according to the meaning of Sacred Scripture.

438 Nicodemus objected to the Lord's statement that a man must be born again according to the two ways in which this seemed impossible. In one way, on account of the irreversibility of human life; for a man cannot return to infancy from old age. Hence we read, "I am walking on a path," namely, this present life, "by which I will not return" (Jb 16:23). And it is from this point of view that he says, **How can a man be born again when he is already an old man?** As if to say: Shall he become a child once more so that he can be reborn? "He will not return again to his home, and his place will not know him any more" (Jb 7:10). In the second way, regeneration seemed impossible because of the mode of carnal generation. For in the beginning, when a man is generated, he is small in size, so that his mother's womb can contain him; but later, after he is born, he continues to grow and reaches such a size that he cannot be contained within his mother's womb. And so Nicodemus says, **Is it possible for him to return to his mother's womb and be born all over again?** As if to say: He cannot, because the womb cannot contain him.

439 But this does not apply to spiritual generation. For no matter how spiritually old a man might become through sin, according to the Psalm (31:3): "Because I kept silent, all my bones grew old," he can, with the help of divine grace, become new, according to the Psalm (102:5): "Your youth will be renewed like the eagle's." And no matter how enormous he is, he can enter the spiritual womb of the Church by the sacrament of baptism. And it is clear what that spiritual womb is; otherwise it would never have been said: "From the womb, before the daystar, I begot you" (Ps 109:3). Yet there is a sense in which his objection applies. For just as a man, once he is born according to nature, cannot be reborn, so once he is born in a spiritual way through baptism, he cannot be reborn, because he cannot be baptized again: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," as we read in Ephesians (4:5).

Consequenter cum dicit *respondit Iesus* etc., ponitur responsio Christi. Et circa hoc tria facit. Primo solvit rationes Nicodemi, ostendendo qualitatem regenerationis; secundo manifestat solutionem per rationem, ibi *quod natum est ex carne, caro est* etc.; tertio per exemplum, ibi *non mireris* et cetera.

Solvit ergo obiectiones, ostendens quod regeneratio de qua loquitur, est spiritualis, et non carnalis. Et hoc est quod dicit *amen, amen dico tibi, nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei*, quasi dicat: tu intelligis de generatione carnali, sed ego loquor de spirituali.

Sed attende quod supra dixerat *non potest videre regnum Dei*, hic vero dicit *non potest introire in regnum Dei*, quod idem est. Nam quae regni Dei sunt, nullus videt, nisi regnum Dei intret; et tantum videt quantum intrat. Apoc. II, 17: *in calculo nomen novum scriptum, quod nemo scit nisi qui accipit*.

Quod autem spiritualis regeneratio ex spiritu fiat, rationem habet. Nam oportet generatum generari ad similitudinem generantis; nos autem regeneramur in filios Dei, ad similitudinem veri filii: oportet ergo quod regeneratio spiritualis fiat per id per quod assimilamur vero filio; quod quidem est per hoc quod spiritum eius habemus. Rom. VIII, 9: *si quis spiritum Christi non habet, hic non est eius*; I Io. IV, 13: *in hoc cognoscimus, quoniam in eo manemus, et ipse in nobis, quia de spiritu suo dedit nobis* et cetera. Oportet ergo quod spiritualis regeneratio per spiritum sanctum fiat. Rom. VIII, 15: *non accepistis spiritum servitutis iterum in timore, sed spiritum adoptionis filiorum*; infra VI, 63: *spiritus est qui vivificat* et cetera.

Et etiam huic regenerationi necessaria aqua propter tria. Primo quidem propter humanae naturae conditionem. Homo enim ex anima et corpore constat, et si in eius regeneratione esset spiritus tantum,

440 Then we have the answer of Christ. Concerning this he does three things. First, he answers the arguments of Nicodemus by showing the nature of regeneration. Secondly, he explains this answer with a reason (v 6). Thirdly, he explains it with an example.

441 He answers the objections by showing that he is speaking of a spiritual regeneration, not a carnal one. And this is what he says: **unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**. As if to say: You are thinking of a carnal generation, but I am speaking of a spiritual generation.

Note that above he had said, **he cannot see the kingdom of God**, while here he says, **he cannot enter the kingdom of God**, which is the same thing. For no one can see the things of the kingdom of God unless he enters it; and to the extent that he enters, he sees. "I will give him a white stone upon which is written a new name, which no one knows but he who receives it" (Rv 5:5).

442 Now there is a reason why spiritual generation comes from the Spirit. It is necessary that the one generated be generated in the likeness of the one generating; but we are regenerated as sons of God, in the likeness of his true Son. Therefore, it is necessary that our spiritual regeneration come about through that by which we are made like the true Son. and this conies about by Our having his Spirit: "If any one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his" (Rom 8:9); "By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us: because he has given us of his Spirit" (1 Jn 4:13). Thus spiritual regeneration must come from the Holy Spirit. "You did not receive the spirit of slavery, putting you in fear again, but the spirit of adoption" (Rom 8:15); "It is the Spirit that gives life" (below 6:63).

443 Water, too, is necessary for this regeneration, and for three reasons. First, because of the condition of human nature. For man consists of soul and body, and if the Spirit alone were involved in his

solum quod spirituale est hominis, ostenderetur regenerari. Ut ergo regeneretur etiam caro, oportet quod sicut est ibi spiritus, per quem regeneratur anima, ita sit ibi aliquid corporale, per quod regeneretur corpus; et hoc est aqua.

Secundo propter humanam cognitionem: nam, sicut Dionysius dicit, divina sapientia ita omnia ordinat ut unicuique provideat secundum modum suae conditionis. Homo autem est naturaliter cognoscitivus; oportet ergo eo modo dona spiritualia hominibus conferri, ut ea cognoscant; I Cor. II, 12: *ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis*. Naturalis autem modus huius cognitionis est ut spiritualia per sensibilia cognoscat, cum omnis nostra cognitio a sensu incipiat. Oportuit ergo ad hoc quod intelligamus id quod spirituale est in hac regeneratione, quod esset in ea aliquid sensibile et materiale, scilicet aqua: per quod intelligamus quod sicut aqua lavat et purgat corporaliter exterius, ita et per Baptismum homo lavatur et purgatur interius spiritualiter.

Tertio propter causae congruitatem: nam causa nostrae regenerationis est verbum incarnatum. Supra I, 12: *dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri*. Congruit ergo quod in sacramentis, quae efficaciam habent ex virtute verbi incarnati, sit aliquid correspondens verbo, et aliquid correspondens carni, seu corpori. Et hoc est spiritualiter aqua in sacramento Baptismi, ut scilicet per eam configuremur morti Christi, dum submergimur in ea, quando baptizamur, sicut Christus tribus diebus fuit in ventre terrae; Rom. VI, 4: *consepulti enim sumus cum illo per Baptismum*.

Hoc etiam mysterium in prima rerum productione signatum est, Gen. I, quando spiritus domini ferebatur super aquas. Sed per tactum mundissimae carnis Christi maior virtus collata est aquis: quia in

regeneration, this would indicate that only the spiritual part of man is regenerated. Hence in order that the flesh also be regenerated, it is necessary that, in addition to the Spirit through whom the soul is regenerated, something bodily be involved, through which the body is regenerated; and this, is water.

Secondly, water is necessary for the sake of human knowledge. For, as Dionysius says, divine wisdom so disposes all things that it provides for each thing according to its nature. Now it is natural for man to know; and so it is fitting that spiritual things be conferred on men in such a way that he may know them: "so that we may know what God has given us" (1 Cor 2:12). But the natural manner of this knowledge is that man know spiritual things by means of sensible things, since all our knowledge begins in sense knowledge. Therefore, in order that we might understand what is spiritual in our regeneration, it was fitting that there be in it something sensible and material, that is, water, through which we understand that just as water washes and cleanses the exterior in a bodily way, so through baptism a man is washed and cleansed inwardly in a spiritual way.

Thirdly, water was necessary so that there might be a correspondence of causes. For the cause of our regeneration is the incarnate Word: "He gave them power to become the sons of God," as we saw above (1:12). Therefore it was fitting that in the sacraments, which have their efficacy from the power of the incarnate Word, there be something corresponding to the Word, and something corresponding to the flesh, or body. And spiritually speaking, this is water when the sacrament is baptism, so that through it we may be conformed to the death of Christ, since we are submerged in it during baptism as Christ was in the womb of the earth for three days: "We are buried with him by baptism" (Rom 6:4).

Further, this mystery was suggested in the first production of things, when the Spirit of God hovered over the waters (Gn 1:2). But a greater power was conferred on water by contact with the most pure flesh of Christ; because in the beginning water brought forth crawling creatures

principio producebant aquae reptile animae viventis; sed ex quo Christus baptizatus est in Iordane, animas spirituales aqua reddit.

Per hoc autem quod hic dicit *nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto*, manifeste apparet spiritum sanctum esse Deum. Supra enim I, 13, dicit: *non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo nati sunt*. Ex quo sic formatur ratio. Ille ex quo spiritualiter renascuntur homines, est Deus; sed homines renascuntur spiritualiter per spiritum sanctum, ut hic dicitur: ergo spiritus sanctus est Deus.

Sed hic est duplex quaestio. Prima est. Si nullus intrat regnum Dei, nisi renascatur aqua, antiqui autem patres non sunt renati aqua, quia non baptizabantur: ergo non intraverunt regnum Dei. Alia est, quia cum sit triplex Baptismus, scilicet fluminis, flaminis et sanguinis, et multi fuerint baptizati ultimis duobus, quos dicimus intrasse regnum Dei statim (cum tamen non fuerint renati aqua) non videtur esse verum quod hic dicitur *nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto*.

Responsio. Dicendum est quantum ad primum, quia regeneratio ex aqua et spiritu sancto fit dupliciter, scilicet in veritate et figura. Antiqui autem patres, licet non fuerint regenerati regeneratione vera, fuerunt tamen regenerati regeneratione figurali, quia semper habuerunt aliquod signum sensibile, in quo vera regeneratio praefigurabatur; et secundum hoc renati intraverunt regnum Dei, soluto pretio.

Quantum ad secundum dicendum, quod illi qui renascuntur Baptismo sanguinis et flaminis, licet non habeant regenerationem in actu, habent tamen in voto: alias enim neque Baptismus sanguinis aliquid valeret; nec esse posset Baptismus spiritus. Sic ergo ad hoc quod homo intret regnum Dei, oportet quod adsit Baptismus aquae in re, sicut est in omnibus baptizatis; vel in voto, sicut est in martyribus et

with living souls, but since Christ was baptized in the Jordan, water has yielded spiritual souls.

444 It is clear that the Holy Spirit is God, since he says, **unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit** (*ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto*). For above (1:13) he says: “who are born not from blood, nor from the desires of the flesh, nor from man’s willing it, but from God (*ex Deo*).” From this we can form the following argument: He from whom men are spiritually reborn is God; but men are spiritually reborn through the Holy Spirit, as it is stated here; therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.

445 Two questions arise here. First, if no one enters the kingdom of God unless he is born again of water, and if the fathers of old were not born again of water (for they were not baptized), then they have not entered the kingdom of God. Secondly, since baptism is of three kinds, that is, of water, of desire, and of blood, and many have been baptized in the latter two ways (who we say have entered the kingdom of God immediately, even though they were not born again of water), it does not seem to be true to say that **unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**.

The answer to the first is that rebirth or regeneration from water and the Holy Spirit takes place in two ways: in truth and in symbol. Now the fathers of old, although they were not reborn with a true rebirth, were nevertheless reborn with a symbolic rebirth, because they always had a sense perceptible sign in which true rebirth was prefigured. So according to this, thus reborn, they did enter the kingdom of God, after the ransom was paid.

The answer to the second is that those who are reborn by a baptism of blood and fire, although they do not have regeneration in deed, they do have it in desire. Otherwise neither would the baptism of blood mean anything nor could there be a baptism of the Spirit. Consequently, in order that man may enter the kingdom of heaven, it is necessary that there be a baptism of water in deed, as in the case of all baptized

catechumenis, qui morte praeveniuntur antequam votum impleant; vel in figura, sicut in antiquis patribus.

Ex hoc quod dicitur *nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto*, Pelagiani errantes dixerunt, quod pueri baptizantur, non quidem ut mudentur a peccatis quae nondum habent, sed ut possint intrare regnum Dei. Sed hoc est falsum: quia, secundum quod Augustinus dicit in Lib. de Baptismo parvulorum, inconveniens est quod imago Dei, scilicet homo, subtrahatur a regno Dei, nisi propter aliquod impedimentum; quod esse non potest, nisi peccatum. Oportet ergo quod in pueris qui subtrahuntur a regno, sit aliquod peccatum scilicet originale.

Consequenter cum dicit *quod natum est ex carne, caro est* etc. probat per rationem, quod oportet nasci ex aqua et spiritu sancto: et est ratio sua talis. Nullus potest pervenire ad regnum, nisi spiritualis efficiatur; sed aliquis non efficitur spiritualis nisi per spiritum sanctum: ergo nullus potest intrare regnum Dei nisi renatus ex spiritu sancto.

Dicit ergo *quod natum est ex carne, caro est*, idest, nativitas secundum carnem, facit nasci in vitam carnalem, I Cor. XV, 47: *primus homo de terra terrenus, et quod natum est ex spiritu*, idest ex virtute spiritus sancti, *spiritus est*, idest spiritualis.

Nota autem, quod haec praepositio ex quandoque designat causam materialem; sicut cum dico, cultellus est ex ferro; quandoque causam efficientem; sicut domus est ex aedificatore. Et secundum hoc, quod dicitur *quod natum est ex carne*, potest intelligi dupliciter, effective et materialiter. Effective quidem, quia virtus quae est in carne, est effectiva generationis; materialiter vero, quia aliquod carnale in animalibus est materia generati. Sed ex spiritu non dicitur aliquid

persons, or in desire, as in the case of the martyrs and catechumens, who are prevented by death from fulfilling their desire, or in symbol, as in the case of the fathers of old.

446 It might be remarked that it was from this statement, **unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit**, that the Pelagians derived their error that children are baptized not in order to be cleansed from sin, since they have none, but in order to be able to enter the kingdom of God. But this is false, because as Augustine says in his book, *The Baptism of Children*, it is not fitting for an image of God, namely, man, to be excluded from the kingdom of God except for some obstacle, which can be nothing but sin. Therefore, there must be some sin, namely, original sin, in children who are excluded from the kingdom.

447 Then when he says, **What is born of flesh is itself flesh**, he proves by reason that it is necessary to be born of water and the Holy Spirit. And the reasoning is this: No one can reach the kingdom unless he is made spiritual; but no one is made spiritual except by the Holy Spirit; therefore, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again of the Holy Spirit.

So he says, what is born of flesh (*ex carne*) is itself flesh, i.e., birth according to the flesh makes one be born into the life of the flesh: "The first man was from the earth, earthly" (1 Cor 15:47); **and what is born of Spirit** (*ex Spiritu*) , i.e., from the power of the Holy Spirit, **is itself spirit**, i.e., spiritual.

448 Note, however, that this preposition *ex* (from, of, by) sometimes designates a material cause, as when I say: "A knife is made of (*ex*) iron"; sometimes it designates an efficient cause, as when I say: "The house was built by (*ex*) a carpenter." Accordingly, the phrase, **what is born of** (*ex*) flesh is itself flesh, can be understood according to either efficient or material causality. As efficient cause, indeed, because a power existing in flesh is productive of generation; and as material cause, because some carnal element in animals makes up the animal

nasci materialiter, cum spiritus immutabilis sit, materia vero sit subiectum transmutationis, sed dicitur effective.

Secundum hoc ergo, possumus accipere triplicem generationem. Unam quae est ex carne materialiter et effective, quae est communis omnibus qui carnalem statum habent. Alia est secundum spiritum effective, secundum quam regeneramur in filios Dei per gratiam spiritus sancti, et efficitur spirituales. Tertia est media, scilicet quae est ex carne materialiter solum, et ex spiritu sancto effective. Et haec est singularis et propria Christi: quia materialiter est habens carnem ex carne matris natus, et effective est ex spiritu sancto; Matth. I, 20: *quod enim in ea natum est, de spiritu sancto est*. Et ideo natus est sanctus; Lc. I, 35: *spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus altissimi obumbrabit tibi: ideoque quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur filius Dei*.

generated. But nothing is said to be made out of spirit (*ex spiritu*) in a material sense, since spirit is unchangeable, whereas matter is the subject of change; but it is said in the sense of efficient causality.

According to this, we can discern a threefold generation. One is materially and effectively from (*ex*) the flesh, and is common to all who exist according to the flesh. Another is according to the Spirit effectively, and according to it we are reborn as sons of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and are made spiritual. The third is midway, that is, only materially from the flesh but effectively from the Holy Spirit. And this is true in the singular case of Christ: because he was born deriving his flesh materially from the flesh of his mother, but effectively from the Holy Spirit: “What she has conceived is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20). Therefore, he was born holy: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And so the Holy One who will be born from you, will be called the Son of God” (Lk 1:35).