

Lectio 5

27 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰωάννης καὶ εἶπεν, οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος λαμβάνειν οὐδὲ ἓν ἐὰν μὴ ἦ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. 28 αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς μοι μαρτυρεῖτε ὅτι εἶπον [ὅτι] οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀπεσταλμένος εἰμὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκείνου. 29 ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου, ὁ ἐστηκώς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, χαρᾶ χαίρει διὰ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. αὕτη οὖν ἡ χαρὰ ἢ ἐμὴ πεπλήρωται. 30 ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι. 31 ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν· ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστίν καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλεῖ. ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος [ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν:] 32 ὁ ἐώρακεν καὶ ἤκουσεν τοῦτο μαρτυρεῖ,

Hic ponitur responsio Ioannis super quaestione sibi delata a discipulis quae quidem quaestio duo continebat, scilicet querimoniam de officio assumpto: unde dicebant *ecce hic baptizat*, et de Christi profectu in fama et opinione hominum: unde dicebant *et omnes veniunt ad eum*. Et ideo Ioannes dirigit responsionem suam ad haec duo: et primo respondet ad querimoniam de officio assumpto; secundo vero ad querimoniam de profectu Christi, ibi *illum oportet crescere, me autem minui*. Circa primum tria facit. Primo ostendit officiorum Christi et sui originem; secundo ipsorum

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27 John replied and said: “No one can lay hold of anything unless it is given to him from heaven. 28 “You yourselves are witnesses to the fact that I said: I am not the Christ, but the one sent before him. 29 “It is the groom who has the bride. The groom’s friend waits there and listens to him, rejoicing at hearing his voice. Therefore in this case my joy is complete. 30 He must increase, and I must decrease. 31 The One who came from above is above all things. He who is of earth is earthly, and speaks of earthly things. 32a The One who comes from heaven is above all things, and he testifies to what he sees, and to what he hears.

513 Here we have John’s answer to the question presented to him by his disciples. Their question contained two points: a complaint about the office Christ took on, and so they said, **he is here baptizing**; and about Christ’s increasing fame and reputation among the people, and so they said, **all the people are flocking to him**. Accordingly, John directs his answer to these two complaints. First he answers the complaint about the office Christ took on. Secondly, the complaint about Christ’s increasing reputation (v 30). As to the first he does two things. First, he

distinctionem, ibi *ipsi vos mihi testimonium perhibetis*; tertio ostendit habitudinem Christi et suam ad dicta officia, ibi *qui habet sponsam, sponsus est*.

Circa primum autem nota quod discipuli Ioannis licet malitiose Ioanni quaestionem proponant, et ex hoc sint reprehensione digni, Ioannes tamen non eos vehementer increpat; et hoc propter imperfectionem: timebat enim ne commoti ex reprehensione, recederent ab eo, et iungentes se Pharisaeis, Christo publice insidiarentur; implens in hoc quod de domino dicitur, Is. XLII, 3: *calamum quassatum non confringet* et cetera. Similiter advertendum, quod a principio suae responsionis non ardua et praeclara de Christo asserit, sed humilia et plana propter ipsorum invidiam. Cum enim excellentia sit alterius invidiae provocativa, si Ioannes statim Christi excellentiam eis proposuisset, illorum invidiae fomentum praestitisset.

Et ideo humilia proponens, dicit *non potest homo a se accipere quicquam*: intendens in hoc eis terrorem incutere; quasi dicat: hoc quod omnes ad eum currunt, non est nisi a Deo, quia *non potest homo accipere quicquam*, scilicet perfectionis et boni, *nisi fuerit ei datum de caelo*, et ideo si vos contradicitis, contradicitis Deo; Actor. V, 38: *si ex hominibus est consilium hoc, aut opus istud, dissolvetur*. Et sic exponit Chrysostomus, referens hoc ad Christum.

Augustinus autem refert ad ipsum Ioannem, et melius. *Non potest homo accipere quicquam, nisi fuerit ei datum de caelo*; quasi dicat: vos zelatis pro me, et vultis quod ego maior sim quam Christus; sed hoc non est mihi datum, nec ego volo mihi usurpare; secundum illud Hebr. V, 4: *nemo assumit sibi honorem* et cetera. Sic ergo patet officiorum origo.

Sequitur officiorum distinctio, cum dicit *ipsi vos mihi testimonium perhibetis*; quasi dicat: ex testimonio meo, quod sibi perhibui,

shows the source of Christ's office and of his own. Secondly, their difference (v 28). Thirdly, how Christ and he are related to these offices.

514 As to the first, note that although John's disciples broach their question maliciously, and so deserve to be rebuked, John nevertheless does not sharply reprove them; and this because of their imperfection. For he feared that they might be provoked by a rebuke, leave him, and, joining forces with the Pharisees, publicly harass Christ. In acting this way he was putting into practice what is said of the Lord: "The burised reed he will not break" (Is 42:3). Again, we should also note that he begins his answer not by telling them what is great and wonderful about Christ, but what is common and obvious; and he did this on account of their envy. For since the excellence of a person provokes others to envy, if John had stressed Christ's excellence at once, he would have fed the fire of their envy.

515 Thus he states something unpretentious, and says, **No one can lay hold of anything unless it is given to him from heaven**; and he said this to them in order to inspire them with reverence. As if to say: If all men are going to him, it is God's doing, because **no one can lay hold of anything**, in the order of perfection and goodness, unless it is given to him from heaven. Therefore, if you oppose him, you oppose God. "If this plan or work is from men, it will fail," as is said in Acts (5:38). This is the way Chrysostom explains it, applying these words to Christ.

Augustine, on the other hand, does much better when he refers them to John. **No one can lay hold of anything unless it is given to him from heaven**: as if to say: You are zealous on my behalf and you want me to be greater than Christ; but that has not been given to me, and I do not wish to usurp it: "No one takes this honor on himself" (Heb 5:4). This is the origin of their offices.

516 Then follows the difference of their offices, when he says, You yourselves are witnesses. As if to say: From the testimony which I bore

potestis scire officium mihi commissum a Christo: nam *ipsi vos mihi testimonium perhibetis*, idest perhibere potestis, *quod dixerim: non sum ego Christus*; supra I, 20: *confessus est et non negavit*. Sed hoc dixi, *quia missus sum ante illum*, sicut praeco ante iudicem. Sic ergo ex testimonio meo scire potestis officium meum, quod est praecedere Christum, et praeparare sibi viam; supra I, 6: *fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Ioannes*. Sed officium Christi est iudicare et praeesse. Et si bene attenditur, Ioannes more providi respondentis, proponentes ex verbis eorum arguit, secundum illud Lc. XIX, 22: *ex ore tuo te iudico*.

Qualiter autem Ioannes se habet ad officium suum, ostendit cum subdit *qui habet sponsam, sponsus est*. et primo ponit quamdam similitudinem; secundo adaptat eam ad propositum, ibi *in hoc autem gaudium meum impletum est*.

Circa primum duo facit. Primo ponit similitudinem quantum ad id quod pertinet ad Christum; secundo quantum ad id quod pertinet ad seipsum, ibi *amicus autem sponsi* et cetera. Circa primum notandum est, quod in rebus humanis disponere, et dominari, et habere sibi sponsam, pertinet ad sponsum tantum; et ideo dicit *qui habet sponsam*, idest ad quem pertinet habere sponsam, *sponsus est*. Iste autem sponsus est Christus; Ps. XVIII, 6: *tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo*. Sponsa sua est Ecclesia, quae coniungitur ei per fidem; Oseae II, 20: *sponsabo te mihi in fide*. Et in huius figuram dixit Sephora ad Moysen, Ex. IV, 25: *sponsus sanguinum tu mihi es*. Et de istis nuptiis dicitur Apoc. XIX, 7: *venerunt nuptiae agni*. Sic ergo, quia Christus sponsus est, etiam ad eum pertinet habere sponsam, scilicet Ecclesiam; sed ad me non pertinet nisi gaudere quod sponsam habet.

Unde dicit *amicus autem sponsi (...) gaudio gaudet*. Et licet supra dixerit quod non erat dignus solvere corrigiam calceamentorum Iesu, hic tamen vocat se eius amicum, ut insinuet caritatis suae fidelitatem ad Christum. Nam servus ad ea quae domini sui sunt, non movetur

to him, you can know the office committed to me by Christ: for You yourselves are witnesses, i.e., you can testify, **to the fact that I said: I am not the Christ**—“He declared openly and did not deny” (above 1:20)—**but the one sent before him**, as a herald before a judge. And so from my own testimony you can know my office, which is to go before Christ and prepare the way for him: “There was a man sent by God, whose name was John” (above 1:6). But the office of Christ is to judge and to preside. If we look at this closely we can see that John, like a skilful disputant, answers them with their own arguments: “I judge you out of your own mouth,” as said in Luke (19:22).

517 He shows how John is related to his own office when he says: **It is the groom who has the bride**. First, he gives a simile. Secondly, he applies it to his own situation. With respect to the first he does two things. First, he gives a simile which applies to Christ; and secondly, to himself.

518 As to the first, [he does two things: First he makes a comparison regarding what pertains to Christ, secondly regarding himself. As to the first,] we should note that on the human level it is the groom who regulates, governs and has the bride. Hence he says, **It is the groom who has the bride**. Now the groom is Christ: “Like a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber” (Ps 18:6). His bride is the Church, which is joined to him by faith: “I will espouse you to myself in faith” (Mos 2:20). In keeping with this figure, Zipporah said to Moses: “You are a spouse of blood to me” (Ex 4:25). We read of the marriage: “The marriage of the Lamb has come” (Rv 19:7). So, because Christ is the groom, he has the bride, that is, the Church; but my part is only to rejoice in the fact that he has the bride.

519 Consequently he says, **The groom’s friend waits there and listens to him, rejoicing at hearing his voice**. Although John had said earlier that he was not worthy to unfasten the strap of Jesus’ sandal, he here calls himself the friend of Jesus in order to bring out the faithfulness

affectu caritatis, sed spiritu servitutis; amicus vero ex amore, quae amici sunt procurat, et fideliter. Unde servus fidelis est sicut amicus domini sui; Eccli. XXXIII, 31: *si est tibi servus fidelis, sit tibi quasi anima tua*. Et ex hoc patet fidelitas servi, quando gaudet de bonis domini, et quando non sibi, sed domino suo bona procurat. Sic ergo, quia Ioannes sponsam sibi creditam, non sibi, sed sponso reservavit, servus fidelis fuit, et amicus sponsi. Et ideo ad hoc insinuandum, se amicum sponsi dicit.

Simile debent facere homines amici veritatis, ut sponsam eis ad custodiendum commissam non ad propriam utilitatem et gloriam convertant, sed ad honorem et gloriam sponsi honorifice praeservent: alias non essent amici sponsi, sed potius adulteri. Unde Gregorius dicit, quod adulterinae cogitationis puer reus est, si placere oculis sponsae desiderat, per quem sponsus dona transmittit. Quod non faciebat apostolus II Cor. c. XI, 2: *despondi enim vos uni viro virginem castam exhibere Christo*. Simile et Ioannes faciebat, quia sponsam, scilicet populum fidelem, non sibi retinuit, sed ad sponsum, scilicet Christum, duxit.

Sic ergo insinuat caritatis suae fidelitatem per hoc quod dicit *amicus sponsi*. Item permanentiam, cum dicit *stat*, firmus in amicitia et fidelitate, non elevans se supra se; Hab. II, 58: *super custodiam meam stabo*; I Cor. XV, 58: *estote stabiles et immobiles*; Eccli. VI, 11: *amicus, si permaneat fixus, erit tibi quasi coaequalis*.

Item attentionem, cum dicit *et audit eum*; idest, attente considerat modum quo sponsus sponsae coniungitur. In quo, secundum Chrysostomum, explicat modum istorum sponsalium; nam per fidem celebrantur: fides autem est ex auditu, Rom. X, 17. Vel *audit*, idest reverenter obedit, disponendo de sponsa secundum imperium sponsi; Is. I, 4: *audiam eum quasi magistrum*: quod est contra malos

of his love for Christ. For a servant does not act in the spirit of love in regard to the things that pertain to his master, but in a spirit of servitude; while a friend, on the other hand, seeks his friend's interests out of love and faithfulness. Hence a faithful servant is like a friend to his master: "If you have a faithful servant, treat him like yourself" (Sir 33:31). Indeed, it is proof of a servant's faithfulness when he rejoices in the prosperity of his master, and when he obtains various goods, not for himself, but for his master. And so because John did not keep the bride entrusted to his care for himself, but for the groom, we can see that he was a faithful servant and a friend of the groom. It is to suggest this that he calls himself **the groom's friend**.

Those who are friends of the truth should act in the same way, not turning the bride entrusted to their care to their own advantage and glory, but treating her honorably for the honor and glory of the groom; otherwise they would not be friends of the groom but adulterers. This is why Gregory says that a servant who is sent by the groom with gifts for the bride is guilty of adulterous thoughts if he himself desires to please the bride. This is not what the Apostle did: "I espoused you to one husband in order to present you to Christ as a chaste virgin" (2 Cor 11:2). And John did the same, because he did not keep the bride, i.e., the faithful, for himself, but brought them to the groom, that is, to Christ.

520 And so by saying, **the groom's friend**, he suggests the faithfulness of his love. Further, he suggests his constancy when he says, **waits**, firm in friendship and faithfulness, not extolling himself above what he really is: "I will stand my watch" (Hb 2:1); "Be steadfast and unchanging" (1 Cor 15:58); "A faithful friend, if he is constant, is like another self" (Sir 6:11).

He suggests his attention when he says, **and listens to him**, i.e., attentively considers the way in which the groom is united to the bride. For according to Chrysostom, these words explain the manner of this marriage, for it is accomplished through faith, and "faith comes through hearing" (Rom 10:17). Or, he **listens to him**, i.e., reverently obeys him, by caring for the bride according to the commands of the groom: "I will

praelatos, qui non secundum Christi mandatum disponunt Ecclesiam.

Item insinuat spiritualem iucunditatem, cum dicit *et gaudio gaudet propter vocem sponsi*; scilicet, cum sponsus sponsam suam alloquitur. Et dicit *gaudio gaudet*, ut ostendat veritatem et perfectionem sui gaudii. Qui enim non gaudet de bono, non vero gaudio gaudet. Et ideo, si ego dolerem ex hoc quod Christus, qui est verus sponsus, sponsae, idest Ecclesiae, praedicat, non essem amicus sponsi: sed ego non doleo.

Immo *in hoc gaudium meum impletum est*, scilicet quod video quod diu desideravi, sponsum videlicet sponsam alloquentem. Vel *in hoc gaudium meum impletum est*, idest, ad perfectam et debitam mensuram pervenit, quando sponsa iam coniungitur sponso: quia iam habeo gratiam meam, et officium meum perfeci; Habac. III, 18: *ego autem in domino gaudebo, et exultabo in Deo Iesu meo.*

Consequenter cum dicit *illum oportet crescere, me autem minui* solvit quaestionem quantum ad querimoniam de profectu gratiae Christi. Et primo ponit huius profectus convenientiam; secundo rationem assignat, ibi *qui de sursum est, super omnes est.*

Dicit ergo: vos dicitis, quod omnes currunt ad eum, idest ad Christum; et sic proficit in honore et fama populi: sed ego dico, quod hoc non est inconveniens, quia *illum oportet crescere*, non in se, sed quantum ad alios, in quantum eius virtus magis ac magis innotescit; sed *me oportet minui*, in reverentia et fama quoad populum: nam honor et reverentia non debetur mihi sicut principali, sed Christo. Et ideo ipso veniente, cessat exhibitio reverentiae quantum ad me; sed crescit quantum ad Christum: sicut veniente principe, cessat officium legati; I Cor. XIII, 10: *cum venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est.* Et sicut in caelo Lucifer praecedit solem ad illuminandum,

listen to him as my master,” as is said in Isaiah (50:4). This is in opposition to those evil prelates who do not follow Christ’s command in governing the Church.

Likewise, he hints at his spiritual joy when he says, **rejoicing at hearing his voice**, that is, when the groom talks to his bride. And he says, **rejoicing** (literally, “rejoicing with joy”), to show the truth and perfection of his joy. For one whose rejoicing is not over the good, does not rejoice with true joy. And so, if it made me sad that Christ, who is the true groom, preaches to the bride, i.e., the Church, I would not be a friend of the groom; but I am not sad.

521 Therefore in this case my joy is complete, namely, in seeing what I have so long desired, that is, the groom speaking to his bride. Or, my joy is complete, i.e., brought to its perfect and due measure, when the bride is united to the groom, because I now have my grace and I have completed my work: “I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will take joy in God, my Jesus” (Hb 3:18).

522 Then when he says, **He must increase, and I must decrease**, he answers their question as to their complaint about the increasing esteem given to Christ. First, he notes that such an increase is fitting. Secondly, he gives the reason for it (v 31).

523 So he says: You say that all the people are flocking to him, i.e., to Christ, and therefore that he is growing in honor and esteem among the people. But I say that this is not unbecoming, because He must increase, not in himself, but in relation to others, in the sense that his power become more and more known. **And I must decrease**, in the reverence and esteem of the people: for esteem and reverence are not due to me as if I were a principal; but they are due to Christ. And therefore since he has come, the signs of honor are diminishing in my regard, but increasing in regard to Christ, just as with the coming of the prince, the office of the ambassador ceases: “When the perfect comes, what is imperfect will pass away” (1 Cor 13:10). And just as in the

quo veniente, cessat eius lux; ita Ioannes praecessit Christum: unde Lucifero comparatur; Iob XXXVIII, 32: *numquid produces Luciferum?*

Significatur hoc etiam in nativitate Ioannis, et in morte eius. In nativitate quidem, quia natus est Ioannes eo tempore quo dies decrescere incipiunt; Christus vero quando dies crescere incipiunt, scilicet octavo Kalendas Ianuarii. Quantum ad mortem vero, quia Ioannes mortuus minoratus per capitis abscissionem, Christus vero sublimatus per crucis exaltationem.

Moraliter autem hoc debet esse in unoquoque nostrum. *Oportet illum*, id est Christum, in te *crescere*, ut scilicet in cognitione et amore eius proficias: quia in quantum magis eum potes cognoscendo et amando percipere, tanto magis Christus crescit in te; sicut qui magis proficit in videndo unam et eandem lucem, reputat lucem magis crescere. Et ex hoc oportet homines sic proficientes minui in sua reputatione: quia quanto plus cognoscit quis de altitudine divina, tanto minorem reputat parvitatem humanam; unde Prov. XXX, 1, dicitur: *visio quam locutus est vir, cum quo est Deus*; et sequitur: *stultissimus sum virorum, et sapientia hominum non est mecum*. Et Iob ult., 5: *auditu auris audivi te, nunc autem oculus meus videt te: idcirco ipse me reprehendo, et ago poenitentiam in favilla et cinere*.

Consequenter cum dicit *qui desursum venit, super omnes est*, assignat rationem dictorum: et hoc dupliciter. Primo ex origine; secundo ex doctrina, ibi *qui de terra est, de terra loquitur*.

Circa primum sciendum est, quod in rebus unumquodque, ad hoc quod sit perfectum, oportet venire ad terminum sibi debitum ex sua origine: sicut si aliquis ex rege oritur, oportet eum tamdiu crescere quousque fiat rex. Christus autem habet originem excellentissimam

heavens the morning star appears and gives light before the sun, only to cease giving light when the sun appears, so John went before Christ and is compared to the morning star: "Can you bring out the morning star?" (Jb 38:32).

This is also signified in John's birth and in his death. In his birth, because John was born at a time when the days are getting shorter; Christ, however, was born when the days are growing longer, on the twenty-fifth of December. In his death, because John dies shortened by decapitation; but Christ died raised up by the lifting up of the cross.

524 In the moral sense, this should take place in each one of us. Christ must increase in you, i.e., you should grow in the knowledge and love of Christ, because the more you are able to grasp him by knowledge and love, the more Christ increases in you; just as the more one improves in seeing one and the same light, the more that light seems to increase. Consequently, as men advance in this way, their self-esteem decreases; because the more one knows of the divine greatness, the less he thinks of his human smallness. As we read in Proverbs (30:1): "The revelation spoken by the man close to God"; and then there follows: "I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not in me." "I have heard you, but now I see you, and so I reprove myself, and do penance in dust and ashes," as we read in Job (42:5).

525 Then when he says, **The One who came from above is above all things**, he gives the reason for what he has just said. And he does this in two ways. First, on the basis of Christ's origin. And secondly, by considering Christ's teaching.

526 Regarding the first, we should note that in order for a thing to be perfect, it must reach the goal fixed for it by its origin; for example, if one is born from a king, he should continue to progress until he becomes a king. Now Christ has an origin that is most excellent and eternal;

et aeternam; et ideo oportet illum crescere per manifestationem suae virtutis, quantum ad alios, quousque innotescat, eum super omnes esse; et ideo dicit *qui desursum est*, scilicet Christus secundum divinitatem. Supra (hoc cap.): *nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo*; infra c. VIII, 23: *vos de deorsum estis, ego autem de superius sum*.

Vel desursum venit secundum humanam naturam, idest de altitudine humanae naturae, assumendo eam in altitudine sua secundum quod fuit in quolibet statu. Consideratur enim secundum triplicem statum. Primus enim status humanae naturae est ante peccatum; et de hoc assumpsit puritatem, assumendo carnem non inquinatam contagio culpae originalis; Ex. XII, 5: *erit agnus anniculus absque macula*. Secundus status est post peccatum: et de hoc assumpsit passibilitatem et mortem, assumendo similitudinem carnis peccati, quantum ad poenam, non ipsum peccatum quantum ad culpam; secundum illud Rom. VIII, 3: *misit Deus filium suum in similitudinem carnis peccati*. Tertius est status resurrectionis et gloriae; et de hoc assumpsit impossibilitatem peccandi, et fruitionem animae.

Sed cavendus est hic error quorundam dicentium in Adam remansisse aliquod materialiter non inquinatum macula originali, et traductum in posteros, puta usque ad beatam virginem; et de hoc corpus Christi fuisse formatum. Quod quidem haereticum est: quia quicquid in Adam materialiter fuit, macula originalis peccati inquinatum est. Materia vero, de qua formatum est corpus Christi, depurata fuit virtute spiritus sancti, beatam virginem sanctificantis.

Iste, inquam, *qui desursum venit* secundum divinitatem et secundum humanam naturam, *super omnes est*, et per eminentiam gradus, secundum illud Ps. CXII, 4: *excelsus super omnes gentes dominus*, et per auctoritatem et potestatem; Eph. I, 22: *ipsum dedit caput super omnem Ecclesiam*.

therefore he must increase by the manifestation of his power, in relation to others, until it is recognized that he is above all things. Thus he says, **The One who came from above**, that is, Christ, according to his divinity. “No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from heaven” (above 3:13); “You are from below, I am from above” (below 8:23).

527 Or, he **came from above**, as to his human nature, i.e., from the “highest” condition of human nature, by assuming it according to what was predominant in it in each of its states. For human nature is considered in three states. First, is the state of human nature before sin; and from this state he took his purity by assuming a flesh unmarked by the stain of original sin: “A lamb without blemish” (Ex 12:5). The second state is after sin; and from this he took his capability to suffer and die by assuming the likeness of sinful flesh as regards its punishment, but not in its guilt: “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). The third state is that of resurrection and glory; and from this he took his impossibility of sinning and his joy of soul.

528 Here we must be on guard against the error of those who say that there was left in Adam something materially unmarked by the original stain, and this was passed on to his descendants; for example, to the Blessed Virgin, and that Christ’s body was formed from this. This is heretical, because whatever existed in Adam in a material way was marked by the stain of original sin. Further, the matter from which the body of Christ was formed was purified by the power of the Holy Spirit when he sanctified the Blessed Virgin.

529 **The One who came from above**, according to his divinity as well as his human nature, **is above all things**, both by eminence of rank: “The Lord is high above all nations” (Ps 112:4), and by his authority and power: “He has made him the head of the Church,” as is said in Ephesians (1:22).

Hic ostendit rationem quantum ad doctrinam. Et primo ostendit modum doctrinae Christi, et eius altitudinem; secundo diversitatem recipientium vel non recipientium ipsam doctrinam, ibi *et testimonium eius nemo accipit* et cetera. Circa primum duo facit. Primo proponit conditionem doctrinae Ioannis; secundo conditionem doctrinae Christi; ibi *qui de caelo venit, super omnes est*.

Circa primum sciendum est quod homo per loquelam suam maxime cognoscitur, Matth. XXVI, 73: *loquela tua manifestum te facit*; et ibid. XII, 34: *ex abundantia cordis os loquitur*. Et inde est quod conditio doctrinae attenditur secundum conditionem suae originis. Sic ergo ad cognoscendum conditionem doctrinae Ioannis, consideremus primo conditionem suae originis; unde dicit *qui est de terra*, scilicet Ioannes, non solum materialiter, sed etiam active: quia corpus eius virtute creata formatum fuit; Job IV, 19: *qui habitant domos luteas, et terrenum habent fundamentum*. Secundo consideremus eius conditionem quae terrena est: unde dicit *de terra est*, idest terrenus. Et ideo tertio doctrina eius describitur; unde dicit *de terra loquitur*, idest de terrenis; Is. XXIX, 4: *de terra loqueris, et de humo audietur eloquium tuum*.

Sed quomodo de terra loquitur qui fuit spiritu sancto repletus adhuc ex utero matris suae? Respondeo, secundum Chrysostomum, dicendum, quod Ioannes de terra se loqui dicit in comparatione ad Christi doctrinam; quasi dicat: ea quae loquitur, parva et humilia sunt, qualia decens est suscipere terrestrem naturam, in comparatione ad illum, *in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae Dei absconditi*, ut dicitur Col. II, 3. Is. LV, v. 9: *sicut exaltantur caeli a terra, ita exaltatae sunt viae meae a viis vestris*.

Vel dicendum, secundum Augustinum, et melius, quod considerandum est in quolibet homine quid habeat ex se, et quid ex alio. Ioannes autem, et quilibet homo purus ex se habet quod sit de terra. Et ideo quantum ad ipsum pertinet, non habet quod loquatur nisi de terra; et si aliqua divina loquitur, hoc habet ex divina illuminatione; Eccli. XXXIV, 6: *cor tuum quasi phantasias patitur, nisi*

530 Now he gives the reason for what he had said above (v 30), by considering the teaching of Christ. First, he describes the doctrine of Christ and its grandeur. Secondly, the difference in those who receive or reject this doctrine (v 32b). He does two things with respect to the first. First, he describes John's doctrine. Secondly, he describes the doctrine of Christ (v 32).

531 As to the first we should note that a man is known mainly by what he says: "Your accent gives you away" (Mt 26:73); "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt 12:34). This is why the quality of a teaching or doctrine is considered according to the quality of its origin. Accordingly, in order to understand the quality of John's doctrine, we should first consider his origin. So he says, **He who is of earth**, that is John, not only as to the matter from which he was made, but also in his efficient cause: because the body of John was formed by a created power: "They dwell in houses of clay, and have a foundation of earth" (Jb 4:19). Secondly, we should consider the quality of John himself, which is earthly; and so he says, is earthly. Thirdly, the quality of his teaching is described: he **speaks of earthly things**. "You will speak of the earth" (Is 29:4).

532 But since John was full of the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb, how can he be said to speak of earthly things? I answer that, according to Chrysostom, John says he speaks of earthly things by comparison with the teaching of Christ. As if to say: The things I speak of are slight and inferior as becomes one of an earthly nature, in comparison to him "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3); "As the heavens are high above the earth, so my ways are high above your ways" (Is 55:9).

Or we could say according to Augustine, and this is a better explanation, that we can consider what any person has of himself and what he has received from another. Now John and every mere human of himself is of the earth. Therefore, from this standpoint, he has nothing to speak of except earthly things. And if he does speak of divine things, it is due to a divine enlightenment: "Your heart has visions, but unless they come



*ab omnipotente fuerit emissa visitatio.* Unde et apostolus dicit, I Cor. XV, 10: *non autem ego, sed gratia Dei mecum;* Matth. X, 20: *non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed spiritus patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis.* Sic ergo, quantum ad Ioannem pertinet, *de terra est, et de terra loquitur.* Si quid autem divinum in eo fuit, non recipientis, sed illuminantis est.

Hic proponit conditionem doctrinae Christi; et circa hoc tria facit. Primo enim ostendit conditionem originis quae caelestis est; unde dicit *qui de caelo venit, super omnes est.* Licet enim corpus Christi materialiter de terra fuerit, active tamen de caelo venit, in quantum virtute divina corpus eius formatum fuit. Venit etiam de caelo, quia persona aeterna et increata filii de caelo venit per carnis assumptionem. Supra eodem: *nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo filius hominis, qui est in caelo.*

Secundo ostendit dignitatem suae conditionis, quae altissima est; unde dicit *super omnes est.* et hoc expositum est supra.

Tertio concludit dignitatem doctrinae suae, quae certissima est, quia *quod vidit et audivit, hoc testatur.* Christus enim, in quantum est Deus, est ipsa veritas; sed in quantum homo, est testis veritatis; infra XVIII, 37: *in hoc natus sum, et ad hoc veni, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati.* Ideo testimonium perhibet de seipso; infra VII, 13: *testimonium perhibes de teipso.* Sed testatur certa, quia quae audivit apud patrem; infra VIII, 26: *ego quae audivi a patre meo, haec loquor in mundo;* I Io. I, 3: *quod vidimus et audivimus.*

Sed nota, quod aliter habetur cognitio rei per visum, et aliter per auditum; nam per visum habetur cognitio rei per ipsam rem visam; sed per auditum non cognoscitur res per ipsam vocem auditam, sed per intellectum loquentis. Quia ergo dominus habet scientiam

from the Almighty, ignore them” (Sir 34:6). So the Apostle says, “It is not I, but the grace of God which is with me” (1 Cor 15:10); “For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit who is speaking through you” (Mt 10:20). Accordingly, as regards John, he **is earthly and speaks of earthly things.** And if there was anything divine in him, it did not come from him, as he was the recipient, but from the one enlightening him.

533 Now he describes the doctrine of Christ. And he does three things. First, he shows its origin, which is heavenly; hence he says, **The One who comes from heaven is above all things.** For although the body of Christ was of the earth as regards the matter of which it was made, yet it came from heaven as to its efficient cause, inasmuch as his body was formed by divine power. It also came from heaven because the eternal and uncreated person of the Son came from heaven by assuming a body. “No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from heaven, the Son of Man, who lives in heaven” (above 3:13).

Secondly, he shows the dignity of Christ, which is very great; so he says, **is above all things.** This was explained above.

Thirdly, he infers the dignity of Christ’s doctrine, which is most certain, because **he testifies to what he sees and to what he hears.** For Christ, as God, is truth itself; but as man, he is its witness: “For this was I born, and for this I came into the world: to testify to the truth” (below 18:37). Therefore, he gives testimony to himself: “You testify to yourself” (below 8:13). And he testifies to what is certain, because his testimony is about what he has heard with the Father: “I speak to the world what I have heard from my Father” (below 8:26); “What we have seen and heard” (1 Jn 1:3).

534 Note that knowledge of a thing is acquired in through sight and in one way another way through hearing. For by sight, a knowledge of a thing is acquired by means of the very thing seen; but by hearing, a thing is not made known by the very voice that is heard, but by means

acceptam a patre, ideo dicitur *quod vidit*, in quantum procedit de essentia patris, *et audivit*, in quantum procedit ut verbum intellectus paterni. Sed quia in rebus intelligentibus aliud est eorum esse, et aliud eorum intelligere; ideo aliter accipitur ab eis cognitio per visum, et aliter per auditum. Sed in Deo patre idem est esse et intelligere; ideo in filio idem est videre et audire. Similiter etiam quia in vidente non est ipsa essentia rei in se, sed similitudo eius, similiter et in audiente non est ipsa conceptio loquentis, sed signum ipsius; ideo videns non est ipsa essentia rei in se, nec audiens est ipsum verbum. In filio autem est ipsa essentia patris accepta per generationem, et est ipsum verbum; et ideo in ipso idem est videre et audire.

Et hoc sic concludit Ioannes, quod ex quo doctrina Christi altior et certior est quam mea, ideo magis audiendus est Christus quam ego.

of the understanding of the one speaking. And so, because the Lord has knowledge which he has received from the Father, he says, **to what he sees**, insofar as he proceeds from the essence of the Father; **and to what he hears**, insofar as he proceeds as the Word of the Father's intellect. Now because among intellectual beings, their act of being is other than their act of understanding, their knowledge through sight is other than their knowledge through hearing. But in God the Father, the act of being (*esse*) and the act of understanding (*intelligere*) are the same. Thus in the Son, to see and hear are the same thing. Moreover, since even in one who sees there is not the essence of the thing seen in itself but only its similitude, as also in the hearer there is not the actual thought of the speaker but only an indication of it, so the one who sees is not the essence of the thing in itself, nor is the listener the very thought expressed. In the Son, however, the very essence of the Father is received by generation, and he himself is the Word; and so in him to see and to hear are the same.

And so John concludes that since the doctrine of Christ has more grandeur and is more certain than his, one must listen to Christ rather than to him.