

QUESTION 39

The Baptism of Christ by John

Next we have to consider Christ's being baptized. And on this topic there are eight questions: (1) Was it fitting for Christ to be baptized? (2) Was it fitting for Him to be baptized with John's baptism? (3) What about the time of the baptism? (4) What about the place of the baptism? (5) What about the heaven's being opened to Christ? (6) What about the Holy Spirit's appearing in the form of a dove? (7) Was that dove a genuine animal? (8) What about the voice with the Father's testimony?

Article 1

Was it fitting for Christ to be baptized?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to be baptized (*non fuerit conveniens Christum baptizari*):

Objection 1: To be baptized is to be washed. But it was not fitting for Christ, in whom there was no impurity, to be washed. Therefore, it seems that it was not appropriate for Christ to be baptized.

Objection 2: Christ received circumcision in order to fulfill the Law. But baptism did not belong to the Law. Therefore, He should not have been baptized.

Objection 3: The first mover in any genus is unmoveable with respect to the sort of movement in question, in the way that the heaven, which is the first mover with respect to an alteration, is not itself subject to being altered (*sicut caelum, quod est primum alterans, non est alterabile*). But Christ is the first baptizer—this according to John 1:33 (“He upon whom you will see the Spirit descending and abiding, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”). Therefore, it was inappropriate for Christ to be baptized.

But contrary to this: Matthew 3:13 says, “Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, in order to be baptized by him.”

I respond: It was fitting for Christ to be baptized:

First of all, because, as Ambrose explains in *Super Lucam*, “Our Lord was baptized, not wanting to be washed, but instead wanting to wash the waters, in order that, purified by Christ's flesh, which was not acquainted with sin, they might have the power of baptism,” and, as Chrysostom says, “in order that He might bequeath the sanctified waters to those who were to be baptized afterwards.”

Second, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaem*, “Even though Christ was not a sinner, He nonetheless took on a sinful nature and ‘a likeness of sinful flesh’ (Romans 8:3). For this reason, even if He did not need baptism for Himself, carnal nature in others was in need of it.” And as Gregory Nazianzus says, “Christ was baptized in order that He might immerse the whole of the old Adam in water.”

Third, as Augustine explains in a sermon on the Epiphany, Christ wanted to be baptized “because He wanted to do what He had commanded everyone to do.” And this is what He Himself says: “So it becomes us to fulfill all justice” (Matthew 3:15). For as Ambrose explains in *Super Lucam*, “This is justice, to do first yourself what you want others to do, and in this way to encourage the others by your example.”

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, Christ was baptized not in order that He might be washed, but in order that He might do the washing.

Reply to objection 2: It was fitting for Christ not only to bring to fulfillment those things that belong to the Old Law, but also to initiate those things that belong to the New Law. And this is why He wanted not only to be circumcised, but also to be baptized.

Reply to objection 3: Christ is the first to baptize spiritually. And it was not in this sense that He

was baptized; instead, He was baptized only with water.

Article 2

Was it fitting for Christ to be baptized with John's baptism?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to be baptized with John's baptism (*Christum non decuerit baptizari baptismo Ioannis*):

Objection 1: John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. But repentance is inappropriate for Christ, since He had no sin. Therefore, it seems that He should not have been baptized with John's baptism.

Objection 2: As Chrysostom explains, John's baptism lay in between the baptism of the Jews and Christ's baptism. But what is in the middle savors of the natures of the endpoints. Therefore, since Christ was not baptized with a Jewish baptism or, again, with His own baptism, it seems that, by parity of reasoning, He should not have been baptized with John's baptism.

Objection 3: Everything that is the best among human realities should be attributed to Christ. But John's baptism did not hold the highest place among the types of baptism. Therefore, it was not fitting for Christ to be baptized with John's baptism.

But contrary to this: Matthew 3:13 says, "Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, in order to be baptized by him."

I respond: As Augustine puts it in *Super Ioannem*, "Our baptized Lord did not baptize with the baptism by which He was baptized." Hence, since He Himself was to baptize with a proper baptism, it follows that He was baptized not with His own baptism, but with John's baptism.

And this was fitting, first of all, because of the situation with the baptism of John, who baptized not with the Spirit, but only with water. But Christ did not stand in need of a spiritual baptism, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 34, a.1), He was filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit from the beginning of His conception. And this is Chrysostom's argument.

Second, as Bede explains, Christ was baptized with John's baptism in order to show His approval of John's baptism by being baptized Himself.

Third, as Gregory Nazianzus says, "Jesus accedes to John's baptism in order to sanctify baptism (*Iesus accedit ad baptismum Ioannis sanctificaturus baptismum*)."

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (a. 1), Christ wanted to be baptized in order to induce us by His example to be baptized. And so, in order that this inducement might be more effective, He wanted to be baptized with a baptism that He clearly did not stand in need of, so that men would come to a baptism that they *did* stand in need of. Hence, in *Super Lucam* Ambrose says, "Let no one flee from a bath of grace, given that Christ did not flee from a bath of repentance."

Reply to objection 2: The baptism of the Jews prescribed in the Law was merely figurative, whereas John's baptism was in some sense real, insofar as it led men to abstain from sin; on the other hand, Christ's baptism has the effect of washing away sin and conferring grace.

Now Christ had no need to receive the remission of sins, since there were no sins in Him; nor did He receive grace, which He was already full of. Again, and similarly, that which was carried out merely as a figure was not appropriate for Him. And this is why it was more fitting for Him to be baptized with a baptism in the middle rather than with a baptism at one of the endpoints.

Reply to objection 3: Baptism is a sort of spiritual remedy. But to the extent that something is more perfect, the less of the remedy it stands in need of. Hence, by the fact that Christ is maximally

perfect, it was fitting that He not be baptized with the most perfect sort of baptism—just as someone who is healthy is not in need of an effective medicine.

Article 3

Was Christ baptized at an appropriate time?

It seems that Christ was not baptized at an appropriate time (*non convenienti tempore Christus fuerit baptizatus*):

Objection 1: Christ was baptized in order to summon others to baptism by His example. But it is praiseworthy for Christ’s faithful to be baptized not only before they are thirty years old, but even in their infancy. Therefore, it seems that Christ should not have been baptized at the age of thirty.

Objection 2: We read that Christ did not teach—or work miracles—before His baptism. But it would have more beneficial for the world if He had taught for a longer time, beginning at the age of twenty, or even earlier. Therefore, it seems that Christ, who came for the benefit of men, should have been baptized, and* should have taught, before the age of thirty.

Objection 3: It was especially fitting in the case of Christ for an indication of His divinely infused wisdom to be made manifest. But in the case of Daniel this indication was made manifest during the time of his boyhood—this according to Daniel 13:45 (“The Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young boy whose name was Daniel”). Therefore, *a fortiori*, Christ should have been baptized as a young boy (*in sua pueritia*).

Objection 4: John’s baptism is ordered toward Christ’s baptism as its end. But “the end is prior in intention and last in execution.” Therefore, Christ should have been either the first one or the last one to be baptized by John.

But contrary to this: Luke 3:21 says, “It came to pass that when all the people were baptized, Jesus also having been baptized and being in prayer ...” And later, in Luke 3:23: “And Jesus Himself, when He began [His work], was about thirty years of age.”

I respond: It was appropriate for Christ to be baptized when He was thirty:

First of all, because Christ was baptized with the intention of beginning, from that point on, to teach and to preach, and for this a mature age (*perfecta aetas*), such as thirty years old, is required. Hence, in Genesis 41:46 we read that Joseph was thirty years old when undertook the governance of Egypt. Similarly, in 2 Kings 5:4 we read that David was likewise “thirty years old when he began to rule as king.” Again, as Ezechiel 1:1 reports, Ezechiel likewise began to prophesy at the age of thirty.

Second, because, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaeum*, “It was going to be the case that, after Christ’s baptism, the Law would begin to pass away. And so Christ came to be baptized at this age, which is susceptible to all sins, in order that, given that He had observed the Law, no one would claim that the reason why He did away with the Law was that He Himself could not live in accord with it (*nullus dicat quod ideo eam solvit quod implere non potuit*).”

Third, because by the fact that Christ is baptized at a mature age, we are given to understand that baptism gives birth to perfect men—this according to Ephesians 4:13 (“... until we all come together, in the unity of faith and of recognizing the Son of God, into a perfect man, in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ”). Hence, even the very property of the number seems to be relevant here. For the number *thirty* arises from multiplying *three* by *ten*, where by *three* one understands faith in the Trinity and by *ten* one understands the fulfillment of the commandments of the Law. And the perfection of the Christian life consists in these two things.

Reply to objection 1: As Gregory Nazianzus explains, Christ was not baptized “because He needed purification, or because some danger would be threatening Him if He deferred His baptism. But every other individual is such that no small danger overwhelms him if he departs from this life without being clothed in the garment of incorruptibility”—namely, grace. And even though it is good to preserve one’s cleanliness after baptism, “it is nonetheless better,” as Gregory puts it, “to be a little bit dirty now than to be altogether lacking in grace.”

Reply to objection 2: The main benefit that Christ brings to men comes through faith and humility, and with respect to both of these it is good that Christ began to teach at a mature age and not in His boyhood or adolescence:

With respect to *faith*, because Christ’s human nature is shown to be real by the fact that He grew in bodily stature with the advance of time. And in order for His growth not to be thought of as imaginary, He did not wish to make His wisdom and power manifest before His body had reached a mature age.

With respect to *humility*, because no one should presumptuously take on a position of leadership, or the role of teaching, before reaching a mature age.

Reply to objection 3: Christ was set before men as an example to everyone. And so what had to be shown forth in His case was what belongs to everyone in accord with common norms, with the result that He would be teaching at a mature age (*in perfecta aetate*).

However, as Gregory Nazianzus points out, “It is not what occurs rarely that is the law of the Church, just as ‘one swallow does not a spring make,’ either.” For by a certain special dispensation, it has, in accord with God’s wisdom, been granted to some individuals—for instance, Solomon, Daniel, and Jeremiah (cf. 3 Kings 3:7, Daniel 13:45, Jeremiah 1:5)—that, beyond the common norms, they should have the role of leading or of teaching before reaching a mature age.

Reply to objection 4: It is not the case that Christ should have been either the first one or the last one to be baptized by John.

For as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaem*, Christ is baptized “in order to confirm the preaching of John and his baptism, and in order to receive testimony from John.” But John’s testimony would not have been believed until after many had been baptized by him. And this is why it was not fitting for Christ to be the first one to be baptized by John.

Similarly, neither would it have been fitting for Him to be the last one baptized by John. For as Chrysostom adds in the same place, “Just as the light of the sun does not wait for the setting of the morning star, but comes forth while the latter is still proceeding and by its brilliance obscures its splendor, so Christ did not wait until John had run his course, but appeared while he was still teaching and baptizing.”

Article 4

Was it fitting for Christ to be baptized in the Jordan?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to be baptized in the Jordan (*Christus non debuerit baptizari in Iordane*):

Objection 1: The reality should correspond to the prefigurement (*veritas debet respondere figurae*). But the prefigurement of baptism came in the crossing of the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were submerged in the way that sins are erased in baptism. Therefore, it seems that it would have been more fitting for Christ to be baptized in the sea than in the Jordan river.

Objection 2: ‘Jordan’ means ‘descent’. But through baptism an individual rises up instead of

descending; hence, Matthew 3:16 says, “When Jesus was baptized He immediately rose up from the water. Therefore, it seems unfitting for Jesus to have been baptized in the Jordan.

Objection 3: As we read in Joshua 4, when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan “were turned back.” But those who are baptized go forward and not backward. Therefore, it was not fitting for Christ to be baptized in the Jordan.

But contrary to this: Mark 1:9 says, “Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan.”

I respond: It was the river Jordan through which the children of Israel entered the promised land. Now the baptism of Christ plays the special role, above all baptisms, of being the entry into the Kingdom of God, which is signified by the promised land; hence, John 3:5 says, “Unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Also relevant is the fact that, as 4 Kings 2:7ff. reports, Elijah divided the waters of the Jordan when he was about to be taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot; for the approach to heaven is laid open by the fire of the Holy Spirit to those who pass through the waters of baptism. And so it was fitting for Christ to be baptized in the Jordan.

Reply to objection 1: The crossing of the Red Sea prefigured baptism insofar as baptism erases sins. But the crossing of the Jordan prefigured baptism insofar as baptism opens the gates of the heavenly kingdom, which is the more important effect of baptism and which is fulfilled through Christ alone. And this is why it was more fitting for Christ to be baptized in the Jordan than in the sea.

Reply to objection 2: In baptism the ascent is made through progress in grace, which requires the descent of humility—this according to James 4:6 (“It is to the humble that He gives grace”). And it is to this sort of descent that the name ‘Jordan’ should be taken to refer.

Reply to objection 3: As Augustine says in a sermon for the Epiphany, “Just as in the past the waters of the Jordan had been turned back, so in the present, when Christ was baptized, sins were turned back.”

Again, an alternative reply is that what this signifies is that contrary to the downward flow of the waters, the river of blessings flowed upward.

Article 5

Was it fitting for the heavens to be opened when Christ was baptized?

It seems that it was not fitting for the heavens to be opened when Christ was baptized (*Christo baptizato non debuerunt caeli aperiri*):

Objection 1: The heavens have to be opened for an individual who needs to enter into heaven because he exists outside of heaven. But Christ was always in heaven—this according to John 3:13 (“... the Son of Man, who is in heaven”). Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for the heavens to be opened for Him.

Objection 2: The opening of the heavens is understood either corporeally or spiritually. But it cannot be understood corporeally, since the celestial heavens cannot be acted upon and cannot be breached (*sunt impassibilia et infrangibilia*)—this according to Job 37:18 (“Perhaps you have made the heavens with Him, which are most solid, hard as brass”). Again, in the same way, it cannot be understood spiritually, since to the eyes of the Son of God the heavens had not previously been closed. Therefore, it seems inappropriate to claim that the heavens were opened when Christ was baptized.

Objection 3: It is through Christ’s passion that heaven has been opened to the faithful—this according to Hebrews 10:19 (“We have the confidence of entering into the holies by the blood of Christ”). Hence, even those had not been baptized with Christ’s baptism, if they died before His baptism,

were able to enter into heaven. Therefore, it was more fitting for the heavens to be opened when Christ suffered rather than when He was baptized.

But contrary to this: Luke 3:21 says, “When Jesus had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1 and q. 38, a. 1), Christ wanted to be baptized in order that by His baptism He might consecrate the baptism by which we were going to be baptized; and so it was fitting for those things to be shown in Christ’s baptism that are relevant to the efficacy of our baptism. And on this score there are three things that need to be considered:

First of all, the principal power by which baptism has efficacy is a heavenly power (*virtus caelestis*). And the reason why heaven was opened when Christ was baptized was to show that heavenly power would sanctify baptism from then on (*de cetero caelestis virtus baptismum sanctificaret*).

Second, the faith of the Church and of the one who is baptized contributes to the efficacy of baptism; hence, those who are baptized make progress in faith and baptism is called the sacrament of faith. But it is through faith that we see heavenly realities that exceed human sensation and reason. And it was to signify this that the heavens were opened when Christ was baptized.

Third, through the baptism of Christ entrance into the heavenly kingdom, which had been closed off to the first man because of sin, was opened up to us in a special way. Hence, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened in order to show that the path to heaven is cleared for those who are baptized.

Still, after baptism continual prayer is necessary in order for a man to enter heaven. For even though sins are remitted through baptism, there still remains the stimulant to sin (*fomes peccati*) attacking us interiorly, along with the demons who attack us exteriorly. And this is why Luke 3:21 says explicitly, “When Jesus had been baptized *and was praying*, heaven was opened,” viz., because prayer is necessary for the faithful after baptism. An alternative interpretation is that the very fact that heaven is opened to believers stems from the power of Christ’s prayer. Hence, Matthew 3:16 says explicitly, “Heaven was opened to Him”—that is to say, “opened to everyone because of Him.” Thus, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaëum*, it is as if a ruler were to say to an individual who is asking for a favor on behalf of someone else, “Behold, I am granting this favor not to him but to you,” that is, “to him because of you.”

Reply to objection 1: As Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaëum*, “Just as Christ was baptized in accord with His human stewardship, even though He did not need baptism for His own sake, so the heavens were opened to Him in accord with His human stewardship, even though He had always been in heaven in accord with His divine nature.”

Reply to objection 2: In *Super Matthaëum* Jerome says, “When Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened to Him not by an unlocking of the elements, but to His spiritual eyes, in the way that Ezechiel, at the beginning of his book, recalls the heavens being opened to him.” And in *Super Matthaëum* Chrysostom agrees with this when he says, “If the creature itself, i.e., the creature of the heavens, had been ripped apart, it would not have said, ‘... were opened to Him,’ since what is opened corporeally is opened to everyone.” Hence, Mark 1:10 explicitly says, “Immediately coming up from the water, Jesus saw the heavens opened,” meaning that the opening itself of the heavens is referred to Christ’s act of seeing. To be sure, some refer this to a corporeal vision, claiming that such a splendor shone around the baptized Christ that the heavens seem to have been opened. Again, it can be referred to a vision belonging to the imagination, in the way that Ezechiel saw the heavens opened, in which case the sort of vision in question was formed in Christ’s imagination by the divine power and the will of reason in order to signify that through baptism access to heaven is opened up to men. Again, it can likewise be referred to an intellectual vision, so that, once baptism had already been sanctified, Christ saw the heaven opened to men, though He had likewise seen beforehand that this would be done.

Reply to objection 3: Heaven is opened to men through Christ's passion as a general cause of the opening of the heavens. However, this cause has to be applied to singular individuals in order for them to enter heaven, and this occurs through baptism—this according to Romans 6:3 (“All of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus have been baptized in His death”). And that is why mention is made of the opening of the heavens at His baptism rather than at His death.

An alternative reply is that, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaicum*, “When Christ was baptized, the heavens were merely opened, but after He had conquered the tyrant through the cross, since gates were no longer required for a heaven which would never again be closed, the angels said ‘Take the gates away’ rather than ‘Open the gates’.” By this Chrysostom means that the obstacles which had previously kept the souls of the dead from entering heaven were removed entirely by Christ's passion, whereas [the gates] were opened at Christ's baptism in the sense that the way by which men were going to enter into heaven had already been made manifest.

Article 6

Is it fitting to say that the Holy Spirit came down upon the baptized Christ in the form of a dove?

It seems that it is not fitting to say that the Holy Spirit came down upon the baptized Christ in the form of a dove (*inconvenienter spiritus sanctus super Christum baptizatum dicatur in specie columbae descendisse*):

Objection 1: The Holy Spirit lives in a man through grace. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 7, a. 12 and q. 34, a.1), the fullness of grace existed in the man Christ from the beginning of His conception, because He was the only-begotten of the Father. Therefore, it is clear that it was not fitting for the Holy Spirit to be sent to Him at His baptism.

Objection 2: Christ is said to have come down into the world through the mystery of the Incarnation, when He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7). But the Holy Spirit is not incarnate. Therefore, it is not fitting to say that the Holy Spirit came down upon Him.

Objection 3: What was fittingly shown in the baptism of Christ, as in a sort of exemplar, was what was going to be effected in our baptism. But in our baptism there is no visible mission of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it was not fitting for there to be a visible mission of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of Christ.

Objection 4: The Holy Spirit flows from Christ into everyone else—this according to John 1:16 (“Of His fullness we have all received”). But the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles in the form of fire and not in the form of a dove. Therefore, He should likewise have descended upon Christ in the form of fire and not in the form of a dove.

But contrary to this: Luke 3:22 says, “The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form as a dove.”

I respond: As Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaicum*, what was done concerning Christ at His baptism “pertains to the mystery of all those who were going to be baptized later on.” But all who are baptized with the baptism of Christ receive the Holy Spirit, unless they approach insincerely (*nisi ficti accedant*)—this according to Matthew 3:11 (“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”). And this is why it was fitting for the Holy Spirit to descend upon our Lord when He was baptized.

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 15, “It is absolutely absurd to claim that Christ received the Holy Spirit when He was already thirty years old; rather, just as He came to baptism without sin, so He did not come without the Holy Spirit. For if it was written of John that ‘he shall be

filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb' (Luke 1:15), what must be said of the man Christ, whose very conception in the flesh was not carnal, but spiritual? Therefore, now,"—i.e., at His baptism— "He thought it right to prefigure His body"—i.e. the Church—"in which those who are baptized mainly receive the Holy Spirit."

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine explains in *De Trinitate* 2, it was not because the Holy Spirit's substance, which is invisible, was seen, that the Holy Spirit is said to have descended upon Christ in bodily form as a dove. Nor, again, was it because the visible creature in question was assumed into a union with a divine person; for one does not say that the Holy Spirit is a dove in the way that one does say that the Son of God is a man by reason of a union [with a divine person]. Nor, again, is the Holy Spirit seen in the form a dove in the way that, as Apocalypse 5:6 reports, John saw the lamb that was slain: "For that vision was effected in John's spirit through spiritual images of bodies, whereas with respect to the dove in question, no one ever doubted that he saw it with his eyes." Nor, again, did the Holy Spirit appear in the way in which 1 Corinthians 10:4 says that 'the rock was Christ': "For that rock already existed as a creature, and because of the manner of its action it was called by the name of Christ, whom it signified, whereas the dove in question came into existence suddenly, only in order to signify something, and afterwards ceased to exist, like the flame that appeared in the bush to Moses."

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is said to have descended upon Christ not by reason of Holy Spirit's union with the dove, but either (a) by reason of the fact that the dove itself signified the Holy Spirit and came by descending upon Christ, or even (b) by reason of the spiritual gift (*ratione spiritualis gratiae*) that flowed from God into the creature in the manner of a descent—this according to James 1:17 ("Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights").

Reply to objection 3: As Chrysostom says in *Super Matthaicum*, "At the beginning of spiritual realities, sentient visions always appear for the sake of those individuals who cannot muster any understanding of incorporeal natures ... so that if such [sentient visions] do not occur in later cases, the individuals sustain their faith because of those things that once occurred." And so the Holy Spirit descended visibly in bodily form upon the baptized Christ in order that it might later be believed that He descends upon everyone who is baptized.

Reply to objection 4: There are four reasons why the Holy Spirit appeared over Christ when He was baptized.

First of all, because of *the disposition that is required in an individual who is baptized*, viz., that he not approach baptism insincerely (*ut scilicet non fictus accedat*), since, as Wisdom 1:5 says, "The holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful." For the dove is a simple animal, lacking cunning and guile. This is why Matthew 10:16 says, "Be guileless like doves."

Second, to designate the *seven gifts of the Holy Spirit*, which a dove signifies by its properties. For a dove lives near streams, so that when it sees a hawk, it immerses itself in the stream and so escapes. This pertains to the gift of *wisdom*, through which holy individuals reside near the streams of divine Scripture in order to escape the devil's attacks. Again, a dove prefers the better seeds. This pertains to the gift of *knowledge*, by which holy individuals choose sound ways of thinking with which they are nourished. Again, a dove feeds the young ones of others. This pertains to the gift of *counsel*, by which holy individuals nourish by their instruction and example men who were once the young ones, i.e., the imitators, of the devil. Again, a dove does not tear things to pieces with its beak. This pertains to the gift of *understanding*, by which holy individuals refrain from perverting sound doctrines by lacerating them in the manner of the heretics. Again, a dove has no gall. This pertains to the gift of *piety*, through which holy individuals lack irrational anger. Again, a dove nests in the cleft of a rock. This pertains to the gift of *fortitude*, by which holy individuals build their nests, i.e., take refuge and hope, in the wounds of the death of Christ, who is a firm rock. Again, a dove has a song of lamentation. This pertains to the gift of *fear*, by which holy individuals delight in sorrow for their sins.

Third, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove because of the *proper* effect of baptism, which is the remission of sins and reconciliation with God. For a dove is a gentle animal. And so, as Chrysostom explains in *Super Matthaenum*, “This animal had appeared in the deluge, bearing an olive branch and announcing the general tranquility of the world, and now a dove likewise appears in the baptism [of Christ], showing us liberation.”

Fourth, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form a dove over our baptized Lord in order to signify the *general* effect of baptism, which is the building up of ecclesiastical unity. Hence, Ephesians 5:25-27 says, “Christ delivered Himself up in order that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, cleansing it by a bath of water in the word of life.” And this is why it was fitting for the Holy Spirit to appear in the form of a dove, which is an amicable and gregarious animal. Hence, Canticle 6:8 says of the Church, “One is my dove.”

On the other hand, there are two reasons why the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles in the form of fire.

First of all, in order to show the fervor by which their hearts had been moved, to the point of preaching Christ everywhere amid hardships. And this is also why the Holy Spirit appeared in “tongues of fire.” Hence, in *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “Our Lord manifests the Holy Spirit visibly in two ways, viz., by the dove coming down upon our Lord when He was baptized, and by fire coming down upon the disciples when they were together. In the first case what is shown is simplicity, in the second case fervor. Thus, lest they have guile through the Holy Spirit, He is shown as a dove, and lest their simplicity remain frigid, He is shown as fire. And lest it disturb anyone that the tongues are divided, recognize the oneness in the dove.”

Second, because, as Chrysostom says, “Since sins had to be forgiven”—which is effected in baptism—“gentleness was required”—and this is shown with the dove. “But once we have received grace, the time of judgment still remains”—and this is signified by the fire.

Article 7

Was the dove in which the Holy Spirit appeared a real animal?

It seems that the dove in which the Holy Spirit appeared was not a real animal (*illa columba in qua spiritus sanctus apparuit, non fuerit verum animal*):

Objection 1: It seems that what appears ‘in the form of’ such-and-such a thing appears as a likeness of the relevant thing (*illud videtur specie tenus apparere quod secundum similitudinem apparet*). But Luke 3:22 says, “The Holy Spirit came down upon Him in bodily form as a dove.” Therefore, it was not a real dove, but a certain likeness of a dove.

Objection 2: As *De Caelo* 1 says, “Nature does nothing in vain, and neither does God.” But as Augustine explains in *De Trinitate* 2, since the dove came “only in order to signify something and to disappear,” a real dove would have existed in vain, since this [signification] could have been effected by the likeness of a dove. Therefore, the dove in question was not a real animal.

Objection 3: The properties of a given entity lead to a cognition of the nature of that entity. Therefore, if the dove in question had been a real animal, the properties of the dove would have signified the nature of a real animal and not the effects of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it seems that the dove was not a real animal.

But contrary to this: As Augustine says in *De Agone Christiano*, “... we do not say this in such a way as to be claiming that our Lord Jesus Christ alone had a real body, whereas the Holy Spirit appeared in a deceptive way to the eyes of men. Instead, we believe that both of those bodies were real.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 5, a. 1), it was not fitting for the Son of God, who is the Truth of the Father, to use any sort of deception, and so He took on a real body and not an imaginary body. And since, as is clear from John 16:13, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, it likewise follows that He formed a real dove in which to appear—even though He did not assume the dove into a oneness of person.

Hence, after the words quoted above Augustine adds, “Just as it was not necessary for the Son of God to deceive men, so it was not necessary for the Holy Spirit to deceive. To the contrary, it was not difficult for the omnipotent God, who created every creature *ex nihilo*, to fashion the genuine body of dove without the help of other doves, just as it was not difficult for Him to fashion a genuine body in Mary’s womb without the seed of a man. For a corporeal creature obeys the Lord’s command and will, both in the mother’s womb in forming a man and in the world itself in forming a dove.”

Reply to objection 1: The Holy Spirit is said to have come down in the form or likeness of a dove not in order to exclude the genuine reality of the dove, but in order to show that He did not appear in the form of His own substance.

Reply to objection 2: It was not superfluous to fashion a real dove so that the Holy Spirit might appear in it. For what is signified by the very reality (*per ipsam veritatem*) of the dove is the reality (*veritas*) of the Holy Spirit and of His effects.

Reply to objection 3: The properties of a dove lead to signifying the nature of a dove in the same way that they lead to designating the effects of the Holy Spirit. For a dove happens to signify the Holy Spirit because of the properties a dove has [by its own nature] (*per hoc quod columba habet tales proprietates contingit quod columba significat spiritum sanctum*).

Article 8

Was it fitting that, when Christ was baptized, the voice of the Father bearing witness to His Son was heard?

It seems that it was not fitting that, when Christ was baptized, the voice of the Father bearing witness to His Son was heard (*inconvenienter, Christo baptizato, fuit vox patris audita filium protestantis*):

Objection 1: Insofar as the Son and the Holy Spirit appeared in a way that could be sensed, they are said to have been sent visibly. But as is clear from Augustine in *De Trinitate 2*, it is not fitting for the Father to be sent [on mission]. Therefore, it was likewise not fitting for Him to appear [in a way that could be sensed].

Objection 2: The voice signifies the word conceived in the heart. But the Father is not the Word. Therefore, it was not fitting for Him to be made manifest in a voice.

Objection 3: The man Christ did not, as certain heretics have thought, begin to be the Son of God at His baptism; instead, He was the Son of God at the beginning of His conception. Therefore, the voice of the Father should have borne witness to Christ’s divinity at His nativity rather than at His baptism.

But contrary to this: Matthew 3:17 says, “Behold, a voice from the heavens said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

I respond: As was explained above (a. 5), in the baptism of Christ, which was the exemplar of our own baptism, it was fitting to make manifest what is brought to perfection in our baptism. But the baptism by which the faithful are baptized is consecrated by the invocation of, along with the power of, the Trinity—this according to Matthew 28:19 (“Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”). And so, as Jerome explains, “In the baptism of Christ the mystery of the Trinity is made known: Our Lord himself is baptized in His human nature; the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove (*in habitu columbae*); the voice of the Father bearing witness to His Son is heard. And so it was fitting for the Father to be made manifest in a voice at that baptism.

Reply to objection 1: *Visible mission* adds something over and beyond *appearance*, viz., the authority of the one is doing the sending. And so the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are from another, are said not only to appear, but also to be sent visibly. By contrast, the Father, who is not from another, can indeed appear, but cannot be sent.

Reply to objection 2: The Father is revealed by a voice only as the author of the voice, i.e., as the one who is speaking through the voice. And since it is proper to the Father to produce the Word, i.e., to say something or to speak, it follows that the Father is most appropriately made manifest through a voice that signifies a word. Hence, the very voice emitted by the Father gives testimony to the Sonship of the Word.

And just as the appearance of a dove, in which the Holy Spirit is made manifest, is not the nature of the Holy Spirit, and just as the appearance of a man, in which the Son Himself is made manifest, is not the very nature of the Son of God, so, too, the voice itself does not belong to the nature of either the Word or of the Father who is speaking. Hence, in John 5:37 our Lord says, “But you have never heard His voice”—i.e., the Father’s voice—“or seen His face.” In this way, as Chrysostom explains, “Leading them little by little to the knowledge of a philosophical dogma, He shows them that God has neither a voice nor a face, but lies beyond all such shapes and utterances.”

What’s more, as is clear from Augustine in *De Fide ad Petrum*, just as the whole Trinity fashions the dove as well as the human nature assumed by Christ, so, too, the whole Trinity effects the formation of the voice—and yet only the Father is made manifest in the voice as the one who is speaking, just as the Son alone assumed a human nature and just as the Holy Spirit alone was made manifest in the dove.

Reply to objection 3: It was not fitting for Christ to have been made manifest to everyone at His nativity; instead, it was fitting that He should remain hidden in His infancy. But once he arrived at a mature age at which He had to teach and to work miracles and to convert men to Himself, His divine nature had to be made known by the Father’s testimony, in order for His teaching to become more credible. Hence, in John 5:37 He Himself says, “The Father who sent me has Himself borne witness to me”—and this mainly in baptism, through which men are reborn as adopted sons of God. For the adopted children are formed in the likeness of the natural Son—this according to Romans 8:29 (“Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made to conform to the image of His Son”). Hence, in *Super Matthaicum* Hilary explains that the reason why the Holy Spirit came down upon the baptized Jesus and the voice of the Father was heard to say, “This is my beloved Son,” was in order that, “in light of those things that were done in the case of Christ, we might understand, after having been washed in water, that (a) the Holy Spirit flies down upon us from heavenly heights and that (b) by the adoption expressed by the Father’s voice we are made children of God.”