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(3a. 38-45)

Samuel Parsons O.P. and Albert Pinheiro O.P.

Excerpt

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ST THOMAS AQUINAS
SUMMA THEOLOGIAE
THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 38, 1

DEINDE CONSIDERANDUM EST de baptismo quo Christus baptizatus est; et quia Christus baptizatus est baptismo Joannis, primo considerandum est de baptismo Joannis in communi, secundo, de baptizazione Christi.

Quæstio 38. de baptismo Joannis

Circa primum quærentur sex:

1. utrum conveniens fuerit quod Joannes baptizaret;
2. utrum ille baptismus fuerit a Deo;
3. utrum contulerit gratiam;
4. utrum alii, præter Christum, illo baptismo debuerint baptizari;
5. utrum baptismus ille cessare debuerit Christo baptizato;
6. utrum baptizati baptismo Joannis essent postea baptizandi baptismo Christi.

articulus 1. utrum fuerit conveniens Joannem baptizare

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod non fuerit conveniens Joannem baptizare. Omnis enim ritus sacramentalis ad aliquam pertinet legem. Sed Joannes non introduxit novam legem. Ergo inconveniens fuit quod novum ritum baptizandi introduceret.

2. Præterea, Joannes *fuit missus a Deo in testimonium*² tanquam propheta secundum illud *Luc.*,³ *Tu puer propheta Altissimi vocaberis*. Sed prophetae qui fuerunt ante Christum non introduxerunt novum ritum, sed observantiam legalium rituum inducebant, ut patet *Malach.*,⁴ *Mementote legis Moysi servi mei*. Ergo nec Joannes novum ritum baptizandi introducere debuit.

3. Præterea, ubi est alicujus rei superfluitas, non est ad illud aliquid addendum. Sed Judæi excedebant in superfluitate baptismatum: dicitur enim quod *Pharisæi et omnes Judæi, nisi crebro laverint manus, non manducant, ei a foro venientes, nisi baptizentur, non comedunt; et alia multa sunt quæ tradita sunt illis servare, baptismata calicum, et urceorum, et ceramentorum, et lectorum.*⁵ Ergo inconveniens fuit quod Joannes baptizaret.

SED CONTRA est auctoritas Scripturæ, ubi præmissa sanctitate Joannis, subditur quod *exibant ad eum multi, et baptizabantur ab eo in Jordane.*⁶

¹cf IV Sent. II, 2, 2 ad 5²John I, 6, 7³Luke I, 76⁴Malachi 4, 4⁵Mark 7, 3

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THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

WE MUST NEXT CONSIDER the baptism with which Christ was baptized. And since it was with the baptism of John,^a we must consider first the baptism of John in general, and second, his baptizing of Christ.

Question 38. The baptism of John

Here there are six points to be treated:

1. whether it was fitting for John to baptize;
2. whether that baptism was from God;
3. whether it conferred grace;
4. whether others besides Christ should have been baptized with that baptism;
5. whether that baptism should have ceased once Christ himself was baptized;
6. whether those who received the baptism of John should afterwards have had to receive the baptism of Christ.

article 1. whether it was fitting for John to baptize

THE FIRST POINT:¹ 1. It would seem not. For every sacramental rite belongs to some law. But John did not introduce the New Law. Therefore it was not fitting for him to introduce the new rite of baptism.

2. Furthermore, John *was sent by God to witness*² as a prophet: *And you, little child, shall be called prophet of the Most High.*³ But the prophets who came before Christ did not introduce any new rite but urged observance of the rites of the Law: *Remember the Law of my servant Moses.*⁴ Neither, then, should John have introduced any new rite of baptism.

3. Furthermore, wherever there is an overabundance of anything, nothing more should be added. But the Jews had too many ablution rites, for it is written that *the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, never eat without washing their hands frequently, and on returning from the market place they never eat without bathing themselves, and there are many other observances handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes and beds.*⁵ Therefore, it was not fitting for John to baptize.

ON THE OTHER HAND, there is the authority of Scripture, where, after having spoken of John's sanctity, it adds that *many made their way to him to be baptized by him in the Jordan.*⁶

⁶Matthew 3, 6

^acf Appendix 1

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 38, 2

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod conveniens fuit Joannem baptizare, propter quatuor. Primo quidam, quia oportebat Christum a Joanne baptizari, ut baptismum consecraret, ut Augustinus dicit.⁷ Secundo, ut Christus manifestaretur. Unde ipse Joannes Baptista dicit, *Ut manifestetur*, scilicet Christus, *in Israel, propterea veni ego in aqua baptizans*;⁸ concurrentibus enim turbis ad baptismum, annuntiabat Christum: quod quidem facilius sic factum est quam si per singulos discurrisset, ut Chrysostomus dicit.⁹ Tertio, ut suo baptismo assuefaceret homines ad baptismum Christi. Unde Gregorius dicit quod *ideo Joannes baptizavit, ut præcursionis suæ ordinem servans, qui nasciturum Dominum nascendo prævenerat, baptizando quoque baptizaturum Dominum præveniret*.¹⁰ Quarto, ut ad pœnitentiam homines inducens, homines præpararet ad digne suscipiendum baptismum Christi. Unde ibidem Beda dicit quod *quantum catechumenis nondum baptizatis prodest doctrina fidei, tantum profuit baptisma Joannis ante baptisma Christi, quia sicut ille prædicabat pœnitentiam, et baptismum Christi prænuntiabat, et in cognitionem veritatis, quæ mundo apparuit, attrahebat; sic ministri Ecclesiæ primo erudiunt, post peccata eorum redarguunt, demum in baptismo Christi remissionem peccatorum promittunt*.¹¹

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod baptismus Joannis non erat per se sacramentum, sed quasi quoddam sacramentale disponens ad baptismum Christi; et ideo aequaliter pertinebat ad legem Christi, non autem ad legem Moysi.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod Joannes non solum fuit propheta, sed *plus quam propheta*, ut dicitur *Matt.*¹² Fuit enim terminus legis et initium Evangelii.¹³ Et ideo magis pertinebat ad eum verbo et opere inducere homines ad legem Christi quam ad observantiam veteris legis.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod baptismata illa Phariseorum erant inania, utpote ad solam munditiam carnis ordinata; sed baptismus Joannis ordinabatur ad munditiam spiritualem: inducebat enim homines ad pœnitentiam, ut dictum est.¹⁴

articulus 2. utrum baptismus Joannis fuerit a Deo

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod baptismus Joannis non fuerit a Deo. Nihil enim sacramentale, quod est a Deo, denominatur ab homine puro; sicut baptismus novæ legis non dicitur Petri, vel Pauli, sed

⁷In *Joan.* XIII, 4 (*John* 3, 22) PL 35, 1494; PL 39, 2011

⁸*John* 1, 31

⁹In *Matt.* x, 2. PG 57, 186

¹⁰In *Evangelium* VII, 3. PL 76, 1101

¹¹Scotus Erigena, *Comm. on John* 3, 24. PL 122, 323; cf St Thomas, *Catena aurea*, in loc. under the name of Bede.

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THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

REPLY: For John to baptize was fitting for four reasons. First of all, it was necessary for Christ to be baptized by John in order for him to sanctify baptism, as Augustine says, commenting on *John*.⁷ Secondly, in order that Christ might be revealed. For which reason John the Baptist himself says: *It was to reveal him, namely, Christ, to Israel that I came baptizing with water*.⁸ For he preached Christ to the crowds that gathered around him to be baptized, which was more easily done than if he had had to search out individuals, as Chrysostom notes, commenting on *John*.⁹ Thirdly, in order that by his baptism he might accustom men to the baptism of Christ; for which reason Gregory says in one of his homilies that *John baptized in accord with his office of precursor, so that, since in birth he had preceded our Lord, he might also by baptizing precede him who would baptize*.¹⁰ Fourthly, in order that by urging men to do penance he might prepare men to receive worthily the baptism of Christ. For this reason Bede says that *the baptism of John was as profitable before the baptism of Christ as instruction in the faith profits the catechumens not yet baptized, because, just as he preached penance and foretold the baptism of Christ, and drew men to knowledge of the truth which appeared to the world, so likewise the ministers of the Church first instruct men, then admonish them for their sins, and lastly promise them forgiveness in the baptism of Christ*.¹¹

Hence: 1. The baptism of John was not a sacrament, properly speaking, but something sacramental preparatory to the baptism of Christ; and therefore, in a certain sense, belonged to the law of Christ, but not to that of Moses.

2. John was not only a prophet, but *more than a prophet*:¹² for he was the end of the Law and the beginning of the Gospel.¹³ Therefore it belonged to him to lead men, both by word and deed, to the law of Christ rather than to the observance of the Old Law.^a

3. Those ablutions of the Pharisees were vain, since they were ordered only to physical cleanliness. But the baptism of John was ordered to spiritual cleanliness, since it led men to do penance, as stated above.¹⁴

article 2. whether the baptism of John was from God

THE SECOND POINT:¹ 1. It would seem that the baptism of John was not from God. For nothing sacramental, which is from God, is named after a mere man; thus the baptism of the New Law is not named after Peter, or

¹²Matthew 11, 9¹³cf Luke 16, 16¹⁴in the corpus¹cf IV Sent. II, 2, 1, iii. In Matt. 21^aThe New Law of the Gospel, cf 1a2æ. 1c6–108

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 38, 2

Christi.² Sed ille baptismus denominatur a Joanne, secundum illud *Matt., Baptismus Joannis unde erat? e caelo, an ex hominibus?*³ Ergo baptismus Joannis non fuit a Deo.

2. Præterea, omnis doctrina de novo a Deo procedens aliquibus signis confirmatur; unde et Dominus dedit Moysi potestatem signa faciendi;⁴ et dicitur, *Cum fides nostra principium accepisset enarrari a Deo, per eos qui audierunt, in nos confirmata est, contestante Deo signis et prodigiis.*⁵ Sed de Joanne Baptista dicitur, *Joannes signum fecit nullum.*⁶ Ergo videtur quod baptismus quo baptizavit, non esset a Deo.

3. Præterea, sacramenta, quæ sunt divinitus instituta, aliquibus sacræ Scripturæ præceptis continentur. Sed baptismus Joannis non præcipitur aliquo præcepto sacræ Scripturæ. Ergo videtur quod non fuerit a Deo.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur,⁷ *Qui me misit baptizare in aqua, ille mihi dixit, Super quem videris Spiritum, etc.*

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, in baptismo Joannis duo possunt considerari, scilicet ipse ritus baptizandi et effectus baptismi. Ritus quidem baptizandi non fuit ex hominibus, sed a Deo, qui familiari Spiritus Sancti revelatione Joannem ad baptizandum misit. Effectus autem illius baptismi fuit ab homine, quia nihil in illo baptismo efficiebatur quod homo facere non potest. Unde non fuit a Deo nisi in quantum Deus in homine operatur.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod per baptismum novæ legis homines interius per Spiritum Sanctum baptizantur; quod facit solus Deus. Per baptismum autem Joannis solum corpus mundabatur aqua. Unde dicitur *Matt.,⁸ Ego baptizo vos in aqua; ille vos baptizabit in Spiritu Sancto.* Et ideo baptismus Joannis denominatur ab ipso, quia scilicet nihil in eo agebatur quod ipse non ageret; baptismus autem novæ legis non denominatur a ministro, qui principalem baptismi effectum non agit, scilicet interiorem emundationem.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod tota doctrina et operatio Joannis ordinabatur ad Christum, qui multitudine signorum et suam et Joannis doctrinam confirmavit. Si autem Joannes signa fecisset, homines ex æquo Joanni et Christo attendissent. Et ideo ut homines principaliter Christo intenderent non est datum Joanni ut faceret signum. Judæis tamen quærentibus, quare baptizaret, confirmavit suum officium auctoritate Scripturæ, dicens, *Ego vox clamantis in deserto, etc.*⁹ Ipsa etiam austeritas

²cf I Corinthians 1, 12⁴Exodus 4⁶John 10, 41⁸Matthew 3, 11³Matthew 21, 25⁵Hebrews 2, 3⁷John 1, 33

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Paul, but after Christ.² But that baptism is named after John, *The baptism of John, where did it come from, heaven or man?*³ Therefore, the baptism of John was not from God.

2. Furthermore, every doctrine which proceeds anew from God is confirmed by signs; thus our Lord gave Moses the power of working signs;⁴ and it is said that our faith *was first announced by the Lord himself and guaranteed to us by those who heard him, God himself confirming their witness with signs and marvels.*⁵ But it is written of John the Baptist that he *worked no sign.*⁶ Therefore it would seem that the baptism with which he baptized was not from God.

3. Furthermore, those sacraments which are divinely instituted are contained in certain precepts of Holy Scripture. But the baptism of John is not commanded by any precept of Holy Scripture. Therefore it would seem that it was not from God.

ON THE OTHER HAND, it is written,⁷ *He who sent me to baptize with water had said to me, The man on whom you see the Spirit descend, etc.*

REPLY: In the baptism of John two aspects may be considered—namely, the rite itself of baptism and the effect of baptism. The rite of baptism was not from men, but from God, who by an interior revelation of the Holy Spirit sent John to baptize. But the effect of that baptism was from man, since it did not effect anything which man himself could not do. It was not, then, from God, except in so far as God works in all human activity.

Hence: 1. By the baptism of the New Law men are baptized interiorly by the Holy Spirit, and only God can do this. However, by the baptism of John the body alone was cleansed by water. Thus it is said, *I baptize you in water, but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.*⁸ And therefore the baptism of John was named after him, because it effected nothing which he himself did not do. But the baptism of the New Law is not named after the minister, for he is not responsible for its main effect, which is the interior cleansing.

2. The whole teaching and work of John was ordered to Christ who, by many miracles, confirmed both his own teaching and that of John. If John, however, had worked signs, men would have paid as much attention to John as to Christ. In order that men might pay more attention to Christ, it was not given to John to work a sign. Yet when the Jews asked him why he baptized he confirmed his office by the authority of Scripture, saying, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, etc.*⁹ Furthermore, the very

⁹John 1, 23

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 38, 3

vitæ ejus officium commendabat,¹⁰ quia, ut Chrysostomus dicit, *Mirabile erat in humano corpore tantam patientiam videre.*¹¹

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod baptismus Joannis non fuit ordinatus a Deo, nisi ut modico tempore duraret, propter causas prædictas:¹² et ideo non fuit commendatus aliquo præcepto communiter edito* in sacra Scriptura, sed familiari quadam revelatione Spiritus Sancti, ut dictum est.¹³

articulus 3. utrum in baptismo Joannis gratia daretur

AD TERTIUM sic proceditur.¹ 1. Videtur quod in baptismo Joannis gratia daretur. Dicitur enim, *Fuit Joannes in deserto baptizans et prædicans baptismum pœnitentiæ in remissionem peccatorum.*² Sed pœnitentia et remissio peccatorum est per gratiam. Ergo baptismus Joannis gratiam conferebat.

2 Præterea, baptizandi a Joanne confitebantur peccata sua, ut habetur *Matt.* et *Marc.*³ Sed confessio peccatorum ordinatur ad peccatorum remissionem, quæ fit per gratiam. Ergo in baptismo Joannis gratia conferebatur.

3. Præterea, baptismus Joannis propinquior erat baptismo Christi quam circumcisio. Sed per circumcisionem remittebatur peccatum originale, quia, ut Beda dicit, *idem salutiferæ curationis auxilium circumcisio in lege contra originalis peccati vulnus agebat, quod nunc baptismus agere revelatæ gratiæ tempore consuevit.*⁴ Ergo multo magi baptismus Joannis remissionem peccatorum operabatur; quod sine gratia fieri non potest.

SED CONTRA est quod *Matt.*,⁵ *Ego quidem baptizo vos in aqua in pœnitentiam:* quod exponens Gregorius dicit, *Joannes non in Spiritu, sed in aqua baptizat, quia peccata solvere non valebat.*⁶ Sed gratia est a Spiritu Sancto, et per eam peccata tolluntur. Ergo baptismus Joannis gratiam non conferebat.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, sicut dictum est,⁷ tota doctrina et operatio Joannis præparatoria erat ad Christum, sicut ministri et inferioris artificis est præparare materiam ad formam quam inducit principalis artifex. Gratia autem conferenda erat hominibus per Christum, secundum illud *Joan.*,⁸ *Gratia et veritas per Jesum Christum facta est.* Et ideo baptismus Joannis gratiam non conferebat; sed solum ad gratiam præparabat tripliciter. Uno quidem modo per doctrinam Joannis inducentem homines ad fidem Christi. Alio modo assuefaciendo homines ad ritum baptismi Christi.

*Leonine: *tradito*, handed down¹⁰*Matthew* 3, 4¹²preceding art.¹cf *IV Sent.* II, 2, 2³*Matthew* 3, 6 and *Mark* 1, 5⁵*Matthew* 3, 11¹¹*In Matt.* x, 4. PG 57, 188¹³in the corpus²*Mark* 1, 4⁴Homily x (*in festo Circumcis.*). PL 94, 54⁶*In Evangelium* VII, 3. PL 76, 1101

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austerity of his life commended his office,¹⁰ because, as Chrysostom says, *it was wonderful to witness such endurance in a human body.*¹¹

3. The baptism of John was ordained by God to last only for a short time for the reasons given above.¹² Therefore, it was not part of a general commandment set down in Holy Scripture, but of a certain inward revelation of the Holy Spirit, as stated above.¹³

article 3. whether the baptism of John conferred grace

THE THIRD POINT:¹ I. It would seem so. For it is said, *John went out into the wilderness, baptizing and preaching a baptism of penance for the remission of sins.*² But penance and the remission of sins are accomplished through grace. Therefore, the baptism of John conferred grace.

2. Furthermore, those who were to be baptized by John *confessed their sins.*³ But the confession of sins is ordered to their remission, which is accomplished through grace. Therefore, grace was conferred in the baptism of John.

3. Furthermore, the baptism of John is related more closely to the baptism of Christ than circumcision. But original sin was remitted through circumcision, because, as Bede says, *under the Law, circumcision brought the same saving aid to heal the wound of original sin as baptism is wont to bring now that grace is revealed.*⁴ Therefore, it is all the more true that the baptism of John effected the remission of sins, which cannot be accomplished without grace.

ON THE OTHER HAND it is written, *I indeed baptize you in water for repentance:*⁵ which Gregory thus explains, *John baptized, not in the Spirit, but in water, because he could not remit sins.*⁶ But grace comes from the Holy Spirit, and through it sins are taken away. Therefore, the baptism of John did not confer grace.^a

REPLY: As stated above,⁷ the whole teaching and work of John was in preparation for Christ, as the helper and under-craftsman are responsible for preparing the materials for the form which the head-craftsman produces. Grace was to be conferred on men through Christ: *Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.*⁸ And therefore, the baptism of John did not confer grace, but only prepared the way for grace in a threefold way: in one way, by John's teaching, which led men to faith in Christ; in another way, by accustoming men to the rite of Christ's baptism; and in a third

¹preceding art., ad 2⁸*John* 1, 17^aOn the sacraments as causes of grace, cf 3a. 62. On baptismal grace, cf 3a. 69

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 3a. 38, 4

Tertio modo per pœnitentiam prœparando homines ad suscipiendum effectum baptismi Christi.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod in illis verbis, ut Beda dicit,⁹ super illud, *Fuit Joannes in deserto*, potest intelligi duplex baptismus. Unus quidem, quem Joannes baptizando conferebat, qui dicitur baptismus pœnitentiæ, quia scilicet ille baptismus erat quoddam inductivum ad pœnitentiam et quasi quædam protestatio, qua profitebantur homines se pœnitentiam acturos. Alius autem est baptismus Christi, per quem peccata remittuntur, quem Joannes dare non poterat, sed solum prædicabat dicens, *Ille vos baptizabit in Spiritu Sancto*.¹⁰ Vel potest dici quod prædicabat baptismum pœnitentiæ id est, inducentem ad pœnitentiam: quæ quidem pœnitentia ducit homines in remissionem peccatorum. Vel potest dici quod per baptismum Christi, ut Hieronymus dicit super illud *Marc.*, *Prædicans baptismum pœnitentiæ, Gratia datur, qua peccata gratis dimittuntur: quod autem consummatur per sponsum, initiatur per paranymphum*,¹¹ scilicet per Joannem.¹² Unde dicitur quod baptizabat et prædicabat baptismum pœnitentiæ in remissionem peccatorum, non ideo quia hoc ipse perficeret, sed quia prœparando ad hoc homines disponebat.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod illa confessio peccatorum non fiebat ad remissionem peccatorum¹³ statim per baptismum Joannis exhibendam, sed consequendam per pœnitentiam consequentem, et per baptismum Christi, ad quem pœnitentia illa prœparabat.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod circumcisio instituta erat ad remedium originalis peccati, sed baptismus Joannis ad hoc non erat institutus, sed solum erat prœparatorius ad baptismum Christi, ut dictum est.¹⁴ Sacramenta autem ex vi institutionis suum habent effectum.

articulus 4. utrum alii, præter Christum, baptismo Joannis baptizari debuerint

AD QUARTUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod baptismo Joannis solus Christus debuerit baptizari, quia, sicut dictum est,² *ad hoc Joannes baptizavit ut Christus baptizaretur*, sicut Augustinus dicit.³ Sed quod est proprium Christo non debet aliis convenire. Ergo nulli alii debuerunt illo baptismo baptizari.

2. Præterea, quicumque baptizatur aut accipit aliquid a baptismo aut baptismo aliquid confert. Sed a baptismo Joannis nullus aliquid accipere poterat, quia in eo gratia non conferebatur, ut dictum est,⁴ nec aliquis

⁹ *Exposit. in Marc.*, on 1, 4. PL 92, 136

¹⁰ *Mark* 1, 8; *Matthew* 3, 11

¹¹ *Exposit. in Marc.*, on 1, 4. PL 30, 592

¹² cf *John* 3, 29

¹³ cf 3a. 68, 6 ad 1