

here speaking of all kinds of miracles and heavenly gifts, which, immediately after the calling of Nathanael, He was about to manifest in the whole period of His mortal life, and after His ascension, in the government of the Church until the end of the world. All these meanings are true and apposite.

But because Christ specially promises this vision of angels to Philip and Nathanael to strengthen and augment their faith in Him, this ascent and descent of the angels upon Him was not fulfilled either at His baptism, passion, resurrection, or ascension. Therefore we say that the words more plainly, simply, and expressly imply that this was an open, or manifest, and peculiar vision of angels coming to the living Christ, such as was given to Jacob, who was a type of Christ. Wherefore that vision of Jacob presignified a similar vision of angels to Christ, a vision like that which took place at His birth, when the angels who descended to Him sang, *Glory to God in the highest*. But where and when this angelic vision took place the Evangelists do not tell us, just as they omit many other acts in the life of Christ. So Jansen.

This vision took place:

1. To show that Christ had reconciled men and angels, earth and heaven, and had restored the mutual communion and friendship which existed in Paradise.
2. To show that Christians are strangers and foreigners on earth, and ought to converse with angels, and imitate the angelic life, as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."
3. To assign angels to us as our guardians, to defend us against all the attacks of men and evil spirits, to urge us to the practice of heroic virtues, and when we die to carry us to heaven. For the angels ascend to bear our sighs and prayers to God: they descend to bring God's gracious gifts to us.
4. To declare the majesty of Christ and the obedience and reverence of the angels to Him. For He, as S. Chrysostom says, has been set "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1. 21).



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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD...

the gospel of  
**JOHN**

CHAPTER 1: 50-51

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

### Continuation of John 1: 50-51

Ver. 50.—*Jesus answered—greater things*—the greater mysteries of My doctrine, life, passion, resurrection, by which thou shalt know not only that I am the King and Lord of Israel, but of the whole universe of heaven, and of the angels.

Ver. 51.—*Ye shall see heaven opened*: not that the heaven was to be in reality cleft, but because it was to afford a passage to the angels going in and out, like as it were a door that is opened. Thus heaven shall appear to be opened. This is the figure of speech called *catathresis*. In like manner, the heaven seemed to be opened at Christ's baptism. So too S. Stephen, when he was stoned, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. By this vision it is signified that heaven, which had been shut for four thousand years because of the sins of men, was now to be opened by Christ.

*The angels of God, &c.*, to obey Him as their King. This is the force of the Greek *ἐπι*,

which answers to the Hebrew *al*. Wherefore Vatablus translates *under the Son of man*, as though Christ said, "under My power and sway, as I will and command." So Frank Lucas.

Observe (1.) that Christ, in calling Nathanael *an Israelite in whom was no guile*, evidently alludes to the vision of angels ascending and descending in the ladder from earth to heaven, which the Patriarch Jacob saw at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 12). So S. Augustine. For Israel or Jacob, was a type of Christ. For Christ is the true Israel, *i.e.*, *having power with God*. Christ is the Patriarch of Christians, the founder of *Bethel, the House of God, i.e.*, the Church both militant and triumphant.

2. Christ, by what He says about this vision of the angels ascending to Himself, signifies that He is the Prince not only of men, but of angels, and therefore true God, the Son of God. For the angels ascend and descend to Him as His ministers, that they may obey and fulfil all His commands both in heaven and earth. So S. Cyril and Chrysostom.

You will ask, When did this descent and ascent of the angels to Christ take place? 1. S. Chrysostom thinks it took place when Christ suffered His agony and bloody sweat in the garden, when an angel appeared, strengthening Him (S. Luke, xxii. 44). Also when the angels appeared to the woman to announce His resurrection (S. Matt. xxviii.)

2. S. Cyril thinks it took place at His baptism; for then it was that by the ministry of angels a dove was formed, and flew down upon Christ, which was the sign of the Holy Ghost. But this had already taken place when Christ spoke to Nathanael.

3. Euthymius thinks it took place at the ascension; for then all the angels accompanied Him as He went up, like servants their prince, and soldiers their king.

4. Toletus thinks that it is continually taking place in the Church, which Christ rules by means of the angels.

5. Maldonatus thinks it will take place in the Day of judgment; for then all the angels, both good and bad, will stand in His presence—the good, that they may after the judgment lead the righteous to heaven; the bad, that they may carry the wicked to hell.

6. Frank Lucas understands the words to refer to the miracles of Christ, and the heavenly gifts, in which the angels were employed by Christ in this life, and afterwards. Jesus means, he says, that at the bidding of the Son of Man from henceforth heaven should seem to be open, with the angels going and coming, because in a short time the angels, being commanded by the Son of Man, would bring great abundance of God's great gifts to the earth, which all would behold, —even the healing of the sick, the cleansing of the lepers, giving sight to the blind, the justification of the wicked, the effusion of the Holy Ghost. And since all of these are manifest gifts of God, heaven could not seem other than to be opened, and the holy angels, by whom heavenly things are ministered, to serve, at the bidding of the Son of Man, by those who beheld Him bestowing them upon many. Christ therefore is