

COMMENTARY ON  
THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

St. Thomas Aquinas

**Lectio 16**

43 τῇ ἐπαύριον ἠθέλησεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς τὴν γαλιλαίαν, καὶ εὗρίσκει Φίλιππον. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἀκολούθει μοι. 44 ἦν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἀπὸ βηθσαϊδά, ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Ἀνδρέου καὶ Πέτρου. 45 εὗρίσκει Φίλιππος τὸν Ναθαναήλ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, ὃν ἔγραψεν μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφῆται εὐρήκαμεν, Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ. 46 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ, ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι; λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ] Φίλιππος, ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε. 47 εἶδεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Ναθαναήλ ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἴδε ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλίτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν. 48 λέγει αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ, πότεν με γινώσκεις; ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν εἰδόν σε. 49 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ναθαναήλ, ῥαββί, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. 50 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἰδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς πιστεύεις; μείζω τούτων ὄψη. 51 καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Posito fructu qui provenit ex praedicatione Ioannis, et eius discipuli, consequenter Evangelista manifestat fructum qui provenit ex praedicatione

**LECTURE 16**

43 On the following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and coming upon Philip, he said, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip came from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip sought out Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found the one Moses spoke of in the law - the prophets too - Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." 46 "From Nazareth!" Nathanael replied, "What good can come from that place?" Philip said, "Come and see." 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him: "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile." 48 Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus replied and said, "Before Philip called you, I saw you when you were sitting under the fig tree." 49 "Rabbi," said Nathanael, "you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus responded and said, "You believed just because I said to you that I saw you sitting under the fig tree! You will see greater things than this." 51 He went on to say, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

309 After having shown the fruit produced by John's preaching and that of his disciples, the Evangelist now shows the fruit obtained from the preaching

Christi, et primo agit de conversione unius discipuli ad praedicationem Christi; secundo de conversione aliorum ad praedicationem discipuli ad Christum conversi, ibi *invenit Philippus Nathanaelem* et cetera. Circa primum tria facit. Primo ponitur discipuli vocandi occasio; secundo subditur ipsius discipuli vocatio; tertio describitur vocati discipuli conditio, ibi *erat autem Philippus a Bethsaida*.

Occasio quidem vocationis fuit exitus Iesu a Iudaea. Et ideo dicitur *in crastinum* autem *voluit exire*, scilicet Iesus a Iudaea, *in Galilaeam*, et *invenit Philippum*. Ratio autem exitus Iesu in Galilaeam assignatur triplex: duae videlicet litterales, quarum una est quia postquam baptizatus fuerat a Ioanne, volens honorem deferre Baptistae, exivit in Galilaeam, a Iudaea recedens, ne sua praesentia offuscaret, et minueret Ioannis magisterium, dum adhuc statum haberet: docens nos honore invicem praevenire, ut dicitur Rom. XII, 10.

Secunda ratio est quia in Galilaea non sunt insignes personae, infra VII, 52: *a Galilaea propheta non surgit* etc. et ideo voluit exire illuc Iesus, et eligere inde principes orbis terrae, qui sunt prophetis maiores, ut per hoc suam virtutem ostendat. Ps. CVI, 35: *posuit desertum in stagna aquarum*.

Tertia ratio est mystica: quia Galilaea interpretatur transmigratio. Voluit ergo exire a Iudaea in Galilaeam ut insinueret quod in crastinum, idest in die gratiae, scilicet Evangelii, exiret a Iudaea in Galilaeam, idest ad gentes salvandas; infra VII, 35: *numquid hic iturus est in dispersionem gentium?*

Vocatio ergo discipuli est ad sequendum; et ideo dicit *invenit Philippum*, et *dicit ei: sequere me*. Et nota, quod aliquando homo invenit Deum, sed quasi ignotum; Prov. VIII, 35: *qui invenerit me, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a domino*. Aliquando Deus invenit hominem, sed ut eum manifestet, et magnificet; Ps. LXXXVIII, 21: *inveni David servum meum*. Et sic Christus

of Christ. First, he deals with the conversion of one disciple as the result of Christ's preaching. Secondly, the conversion of others due to the preaching of the disciple just converted to Christ (v 45). As to the first he does three things: first, the occasion when the disciple is called is given; secondly, his calling is described; thirdly, his situation.

310 The occasion of his calling was the departure of Jesus from Judea. So he says, **On the following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and coming upon Philip**. There are three reasons why Jesus left for Galilee, two of which are literal. One of these is that after being baptized by John and desiring to shed honor on the Baptist, he left Judea for Galilee so that his presence would not obscure and lessen John's teaching authority (while he still retained that state); and this teaches us to show honor to one another, as is said in Romans (12:10).

The second reason is that there are no distinguished persons in Galilee: "No prophet is to rise from Galilee" (below 7:52). And so, to show the greatness of his power, Christ wished to go there and choose there the princes of the earth, who are greater than the prophets: "He has turned the desert into pools of water," as we read in Psalm 106 (v 35).

The third reason is mystical: for "Galilee" means "passage." So Christ desired to go from Judea into Galilee in order to indicate that on "on the following day," i.e., on the day of grace, that is, the day of the Good News, he would pass from Judea into Galilee, i.e., to save the Gentiles: "Is he going to go to those who are dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" (below 7:35).

311 A disciple's vocation is to follow: hence he says that after Christ found Philip he said, **Follow me**. Note that sometimes man finds God, but without knowing it, as it were: "He who finds me will find life, and will have salvation from the Lord" (Prv 8:35). And at other times God finds the man, in order to bestow honor and greatness upon him: "I have found David, my

invenit Philippum, ut eum ad fidem et gratiam vocet: et ideo statim dicit *sequere me*.

Quaestio est quare Iesus a principio non vocavit discipulos. Ad quod respondet Chrysostomus, quod noluit a principio aliquem vocare, antequam aliquis spontaneus ei adhaereret per praedicationem Ioannis: quia homines magis exemplo trahuntur quam verbis Ex. XXVI, *cortina trahit cortinam*.

Quaeritur etiam quare Philippus statim ad unum verbum secutus est Christum, cum Andreas eum secutus fuerit audiens a Ioanne de Christo, Petrus autem ab Andrea.

Ad hoc est triplex responsio. Una, quia Philippus iam instructus erat a Ioanne; quia, secundum unam expositionem supra positam, ille alius, qui cum Andrea secutus est Christum, erat Philippus. Alia ratio est quia vox Christi virtutem quamdam habebat ut non solum exterius, sed etiam interius cor moveret; Ier. XXIII, 29: *verba mea sunt quasi ignis*. Non enim vox Christi solum exterioribus dicebatur, sed fidelium interiora ad eius inflammabat amorem. Tertio, quia forte Philippus iam de Christo fuerat instructus ab Andrea et Petro, quia ex eadem villa erant; quod Evangelista videtur innuere per hoc quod subdit *erat autem Philippus a Bethsaida civitate Andreae et Petri*.

In quo discipuli vocati conditio exprimitur: quia erat a Bethsaida. Et sic congruit mysterio. Bethsaida enim domus venatorum interpretatur: ut ostendat quales tunc animo erant Philippus, Petrus et Andreas, et quod de domo venatorum, congrue venatores ad capiendas animas ad vitam vocaret. Ier. XVI, 16: *mittam meos venatores* et cetera.

Consequenter ponitur fructus discipuli ad Christum conversi, et primo ponitur inchoatio fructus facta a discipulo; secundo consummatio facta per Christum, ibi *vidit Iesus Nathanaelem*. Circa primum tria facit. Primo ponitur Annuntiatio Philippi; secundo responsio Nathanaelis, ibi *et dixit Nathanael*; tertio consequens admonitio Philippi, ibi *dicit ei Philippus*.

servant” (Ps 88:2 1 ). Christ found Philip in this way, that is, to call him to the faith and to grace. And so he says at once, **Follow me**.

312 There is a question here: Why did not Jesus call his disciples at the very beginning? Chrysostom answers that he did not wish to call anyone before someone clung to him spontaneously because of John’s preaching, for men are drawn by example more than by words.

313 One might also ask why Philip followed Christ immediately after only a word, while Andrew followed Christ after hearing about him from John, and Peter after hearing from Andrew.

Three answers can be given. One is that Philip had already been instructed by John: for according to one of the explanations given above, Philip was that other disciple who followed Christ along with Andrew. Another is that Christ’s voice had power not only to act on one’s hearing from without, but also on the heart from within: “My words are like fire” (Jer 23:29). For the voice of Christ was spoken not only to the exterior, but it enkindled the interior of the faithful to love him. The third answer is that Philip had perhaps already been instructed about Christ by Andrew and Peter, since they were from the same town. In fact, this is what the Evangelist seems to imply by adding, **Now Philip came from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter**.

314 This gives us the situation of the disciples he called: for they were from Bethsaida. And this is appropriate to this mystery. For “Bethsaida” means “house of hunters,” to show the attitude of Philip, Peter and Andrew at that time, and because it was fitting to call, from the house of hunters, hunters who were to capture souls for life: “I will send my hunters” (Jer 16:16).

315 Now the fruit produced by the disciple who was converted to Christ is given. First, the beginning of the fruit, coming from this disciple. Secondly, its consummation by Christ (v 47). As to the first, he does three things: first, the statement of Philip is given; secondly, Nathanael’s response; and thirdly, Philip’s ensuing advice.

Circa primum attende, quod sicut Andreas perfecte conversus studuit adducere fratrem suum ad Christum, ita et Philippus fratrem suum Nathanaelem. Et ideo dicit *invenit Philippus Nathanaelem*, quem forte quaerebat, sicut Andreas Petrum quaesierat: quod fuit signum perfectae conversionis. *Et dixit ei*. Nathanael interpretatur donum Dei; et quod aliquis ad Christum convertatur, ex dono Dei est.

Annuntiat autem ei omnes prophetias et legem complementum habere, et desideria sanctorum patrum non esse frustrata, sed esse verificata, et quod eorum desideriis erat promissum a Deo, iam adimpletum esse. *Quem scripsit Moyses in lege et prophetis, invenimus Iesum*; per quod datur intelligi quod Nathanael erat satis peritus in lege, et quod etiam Philippus iam instructus de Christo, voluit Nathanaelem ex sibi notis, scilicet ex lege et prophetis, inducere ad Christum, et ideo dicit *quem scripsit Moyses* et cetera. Moyses enim de Christo scripsit; infra V, 46: *si crederetis Moysi, crederetis forsitan et mihi: de me enim ille scripsit*. Similiter prophetae de Christo scripserunt; Act. c. X, 43: *huic omnes prophetae testimonium perhibent*.

Etiam attende, quod tria dicit de Christo Philippus, legi et prophetis consona. Primo quidem nomen; unde dixit *invenimus Iesum*. Et hoc consonat prophetis: Is. XIX, v. 20: *mittam eis salvatorem* etc.; Hab. ult., v. 18: *exultabo in Deo Iesu meo*.

Secundo vero genus, unde duxit originem humanam cum dicit *filium Ioseph*, scilicet qui erat de domo David et familia. Et quamvis ex eo Christus originem non duxerit, tamen ex virgine duxit, quae erat de eadem progenie cum Ioseph. Vocat autem *filium Ioseph*, quia eius filius aestimabatur esse, cui scilicet desponsata erat mater eius. Unde dicitur Lc. c. III, 23: *ut putabatur filius Ioseph*. Nec mirum, si Philippus vocabat eum filium Ioseph, cum et mater eius divinae incarnationis conscia, ipsum eius filium diceret; Lc. II, 48, *pater tuus, et ego dolentes quaerebamus te*. Et si quidem aliquis filius alicuius vocatur, quia nutritur ab ipso, Ioseph multo amplius pater Iesu dici poterat, licet secundum carnem pater non esset: quia et eum nutraverat, et sponsus matris virginis erat. Dicitur autem hic a Philippo non tamquam de commixtione Ioseph et virginis natus esset, sed quia sciebat Christum de generatione David

316 As to the first, note that just as Andrew, after having been perfectly converted, was eager to lead his brother to Christ, so too Philip with regard to his brother, Nathanael. And so he says that Philip found Nathanael, whom he probably looked for as Andrew did for Peter; and this was a sign of a perfect conversion. The word “Nathanael” means “gift of God”; and it is God’s gift if anyone is converted to Christ.

He tells him that all the prophecies and the law have been fulfilled, and that the desires of their holy forefathers are not in vain, but have been guaranteed, and that what God has promised was now accomplished. **We have found the one Moses spoke of in the law—the prophets too—Jesus**. We understand by this that Nathanael was fairly learned in the law, and that Philip, now having learned about Christ, wished to lead Nathanael to Christ through the things he himself knew, that is, from the law and the prophets. So he says, **the one Moses spoke of in the law**. For Moses wrote of Christ: “If you believed Moses, you would perhaps believe me, for he wrote of me” (below 5:46). **The prophets too** wrote of Christ: “All the prophets bear witness to him” (Acts 10:43).

317 Note that Philip says three things about Christ that are in agreement with the law and the prophets. First, the name: for he says, **We have found Jesus**. And this agrees with the prophets: “I will send them a Savior” (Is 19:20); “I will rejoice in God, my Jesus” (Hb 3:18).

Secondly, the family from which Christ took his human origin, when he says, **son of Joseph**, i.e., who was of the house and family of David. And although Jesus did not derive his origin from him, yet he did derive it from the Virgin, who was of the same line as Joseph. He calls him the son of Joseph, because Jesus was considered to be the son of the one to whom his mother was married. So it is said: “the son of Joseph (as was supposed)” (Lk 3:23). Nor is it strange that Philip called him the son of Joseph, since his own mother, who was aware of his divine incarnation, called him his son: “Your father and I have been looking for you in sorrow” (Lk 2:48). Indeed, if one is called the son of another because he is supported by him, this is more reason why Joseph should be called the father of Jesus, even though he was not so according to the flesh: for he not only supported him, but was

nasciturum, de cuius domo et familia erat Ioseph, cui desponsata erat Maria. Et hoc etiam consonat prophetis: Ierem. XXIII, 5: *suscitabo David germen iustum* et cetera.

Tertio commemorat patriam, dicens *a Nazareth*: non quia in ea natus esset, immo in Bethlehem, sed quia in ea erat nutritus. Quia enim nativitas eius multis erat incognita, locus autem ubi nutritus erat, cognitus erat multis, ideo Philippus Bethlehem tacuit, et posuit Nazareth. Et hoc quidem consonat dictis prophetarum; nam, Is. XI, 1: *egredietur virga de radice Iesse, et flos, sive Nazaraeus, secundum aliam litteram, de radice eius ascendet.*

Consequenter cum dicit *et dixit ei Nathanael* etc. ponitur responsio Nathanaelis: quod quidem potest legi et assertive et interrogative; et utroque modo eiusmodi responsio congruit verbis Philippi. Si enim, secundum quod Augustinus vult, legatur assertive, est sensus: *a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse*. Idest, a civitate, tanti nominis, potest esse quod aliquid summae gratiae nobis oriatur, seu aliquis doctor eximius, qui florem virtutum et munditiam sanctitatis nobis praedicet. Nazareth enim flos interpretatur. Ex quo datur intelligi quod Nathanael doctissimus in lege, scrutatus Scripturas, praenoscebat quod de Nazareth expectandus esset salvator, quod non facile alii Scribae et Pharisaei noverant; et ideo, cum Philippus diceret *invenimus Iesum a Nazareth*, erectus in spem, respondit: vere a Nazareth potest esse et cetera.

Si vero legatur, secundum Chrysostomum, interrogative, tunc est sensus: *a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?* Quasi dicat: omnia alia quae dicis credibilia videntur esse, quia et nomen et genus prophetis consonat, sed hoc quod dicis *a Nazareth*, non videtur possibile. Nathanael enim habuerat per Scripturas, quod a Bethlehem oportet Christum venire, secundum illud Matth. II, 6: *et tu, Bethlehem terra Iuda, nequaquam minima es in principibus Iuda: ex te enim exiet dux qui regat populum meum Israel*. Et ideo, non inveniens convenire

the husband of his virgin mother. However, Philip calls him the son of Joseph (not as though he was born from the union of Joseph and the Virgin) because he knew that Christ would be born from the line of David; and this was the house and family of Joseph, to whom Mary was married. And this also is in agreement with the prophets: “I will raise up a just branch for David” (Jer 23:5).

Thirdly, he mentions his native land, saying, **from Nazareth**; not because he had been born there, but because he was brought up there; but he had been born in Bethlehem. Philip omits to mention Bethlehem but not Nazareth because, while the birth of Christ was not known to many, the place where he was brought up was. And this also agrees with the prophets: “A shoot will arise from the root of Jesse, and a flower (or Nazarene, according to another version) will rise up from his roots” (Is I I: I).

318 Then when he says, **Nathanael replied**, the answer of Nathanael is given. His answer can be interpreted as an assertion or as a question; and in either way it is suitable to Philip’s affirmation. If it is taken as an assertion, as Augustine does, the meaning is: “Some good can come from Nazareth.” In other words, from a city with that name it is possible that there come forth to us some very excellent grace or some outstanding teacher to preach to us about the flower of the virtues and the purity of sanctity; for “Nazareth” means “flower.” We can understand from this that Nathanael, being quite learned in the law and a student of the Scriptures, knew that the Savior was expected to come from Nazareth—something that was not so clear even to the Scribes and Pharisees. And so when Philip said, **We have found Jesus from Nazareth**, his hopes were lifted and he answered: “Indeed, some good can come from Nazareth.”

But if we take his answer as a question, as Chrysostom does, then the sense is: **From Nazareth! What good can come from that place?** As if to say: Everything else you say seems credible, because his name and his lineage are consistent with the prophecies, but your statement that he is **from Nazareth** does not seem possible. For Nathanael understood from the Scriptures that the Christ was to come from Bethlehem, according to: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah:

enunciationem Philippi cum prophetica praedicatione, prudenter et mansuete de veritate dicti interrogat *a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?*

Consequenter ponitur admonitio Philippi: *dixit ei Philippus: veni et vide*; quae quidem admonitio utrique responsioni Nathanaelis convenit. Assertive quidem, ut dicatur: tu dicis quod a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse, sed ego dico, quod illud bonum quod tibi annuntio, tantum et tam magnificum est quod ego exprimere non valeo; et ideo *veni, et vide*. Interrogative autem legitur sic. Tu admirando dicis: *a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?* Reputans hoc esse impossibile secundum Scripturas; sed si experiri volueris quae ego expertus sum, intelliges vera esse quae dico; et ideo *veni, et vide*.

Trahit quidem Philippus Nathanaelem ad Christum, eius interrogationibus non fractus, qui scit de reliquo eum non contradicturum, si verba et doctrinam Christi gustaverit: et in hoc Philippus Christum secutus est, qui superius interrogantibus eum de habitaculo, respondit: *venite, et videte*. Ps. XXXIII, 6: *accedite ad eum, et illuminamini*.

Consequenter cum dicit *vidit Iesus Nathanaelem*, ponitur consummatio fructus per Christum. Sciendum autem, quod aliqui dupliciter convertuntur ad Christum: quidam per miracula visa, et experta in se, sive in aliis; quidam vero per spirationes internas, et per prophetiam et praenoscentiam occulorum futurorum. Sed efficacior est modus per prophetias et praenoscentiam futurorum converti, quam per miracula. Ipsi enim Daemones, et aliqui homines eorum auxilio, aliqua mira praetendere possunt: sed futura praedicere solius divinae virtutis opus est; Is. XLI, 23: *ventura quoque annuntiate, et dicemus quod dii estis*; I Cor. c. XIV, 22: *prophetiae datae sunt fidelibus*. Et inde est quod dominus non per miracula, sed per praenuntiationem occulorum Nathanaelem ad fidem trahit; et ideo dicit de eo *ecce vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est*.

for out of you a ruler will come forth, who will rule my people Israel,” as we read in Matthew (2:6). And so, not finding Philip’s statement in agreement with the prophecy, he prudently and moderately inquires about its truth, **What good can come from that place?**

319 Then Philip’s advice is given, **Come and see**. And this advice suits either interpretation of Nathanael’s answer. To the assertive interpretation it is as though he says: You say that something good can come from Nazareth, but I say that the good I state to you is of such a nature and so marvelous that I am unable to express it in words, so **Come and see**. To the interpretation that makes it a question, it is as though he says: You wonder and say: **What good can come from that place?**, thinking that this is impossible according to the Scriptures. But if you are willing to experience what I experienced, you will understand that what I say is true, so **Come and see**.

Then, not discouraged by his questions, Philip brings Nathanael to Christ. He knew that he would no longer argue with him if he tasted the words and teaching of Christ. And in this, Philip was imitating Christ who earlier answered those who had asked about the place where he lived: “Come and see ... “Come to him, and be enlightened” (Ps 33:6).

320 Then when he says, **When Jesus saw Nathanael**, the consummation of this fruit by Christ is described. We should note that there are two ways in which men are converted to Christ: some by miracles they have seen and things experienced in themselves or in others; others are converted through internal insights, through prophecy and the foreknowledge of what is hidden in the future. The second way is more efficacious than the first: for devils and certain men who receive their help can simulate marvels; but to predict the future can only be done by divine power. “Tell us what is to come, and we will say that you are gods” (Is 41:23); “Prophecies are for those who believe.” And so our Lord draws Nathanael to the faith not by miracles but by making known things which are hidden. And so he says of him, **Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile**.

Ubi tria occulta ei insinuat, scilicet occulta praesentia, quae sunt in corde, praeterita facta, et futura caelestia: quae quidem tria scire, divinum est, non humanum opus.

Occulta quidem praesentia insinuat ei, cum dicit *ecce vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est*: ubi quidem primo ponitur Christi praenuntiatio; secundo vero Nathanaelis inquisitio, ibi *unde me nosti*?

Dicit ergo circa primum *vidit Iesus Nathanaelem venientem ad se*, quasi dicat: antequam ad ipsum perveniret, dixit de eo: *ecce vere Israelita* et cetera. Dixit autem hoc de eo antequam ad ipsum perveniret, quia si dixisset hoc postquam ad Iesum pervenisset, potuisset credere Nathanael quod hoc Iesus audivisset a Philippo.

Dixit autem *ecce vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est*: Israel autem duas interpretationes habet. Uno enim modo interpretatur rectissimus; Is. XLIV, 2: *noli timere, serve meus rectissime, quem elegi*, ubi dicit Glossa, quod Israel interpretatur rectissimus. Alio modo Israel interpretatur vir videns Deum. Et secundum utrumque, Nathanael est vere Israelita: quia enim ille dicitur rectus in quo non est dolus, ideo dicitur *vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est*; quasi dicat: vere repraesentas genus tuum, quia tu es rectus et sine dolo. Quia vero per munditiam et simplicitatem homo Deum videt, ideo dixit *vere Israelita*; idest, tu es vir vere videns Deum, quia tu es simplex et sine dolo.

Dixit autem *in quo dolus non est*, ne credatur quod malitiose dixerit: *a Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?* Quasi interrogans.

Augustinus autem aliter exponit. Manifestum est enim quod omnes sub peccato nascuntur. Illi ergo dicuntur dolosi qui peccatum habentes in corde, exterius fingunt se iustos; qui vero peccator est, et se peccatorem confitetur, non est dolosus. Dixit ergo *ecce vere Israelita, in quo dolus non est*, non quod peccatum non haberet, non quod illi medicus necessarius non esset, quia nemo sic natus est ut nullo medico indigeat; sed in eo confessionem peccati laudavit.

321 Christ mentions three hidden matters: things hidden in the present, in the heart; past facts; and future heavenly matters. To know these three things is not a human but a divine achievement.

He mentions things hidden in the present when he says, **Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile**. Here we have, first, the prior revelation of Christ; secondly, Nathanael's question, **How do you know me?**

322 First he says, **When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him**. As if to say: Before Nathanael reached him, Jesus said, **Here is a true Israelite**. He said this about him before he came to him, because had he said it after he came, Nathanael might have believed that Jesus had heard it from Philip.

Christ said, **Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile**. Now "Israel" has two meanings. One of these, as the Gloss says, is "most righteous".—"Do not fear, my most righteous servant, whom I have chosen" (Is 44:2). Its second meaning is "the man who sees God." And according to each meaning Nathanael is a true Israelite. For since one in whom there is no guile is called righteous, Nathanael is said to be a **true Israelite, in whom there is no guile**. As if to say: You truly represent your race because you are righteous and without guile. Further, because man sees God through cleanness of heart and simplicity, Christ said, **a true Israelite**, i.e., you are a man who truly sees God because you are simple and without guile.

Further, he said, **in whom there is no guile**, so that we do not think that it was with malice that Nathanael asked: **What good can come from that place?**

323 Augustine has a different explanation of this passage. It is clear that all are born under sin. Now those who have sin in their hearts but outwardly pretend to be just are called guileful. But a sinner who admits that he is a sinner is not guileful. So Christ said, **Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile**, not because Nathanael was without sin, or because he had

Consequenter cum dicit *unde me nosti?* Ponitur Nathanaelis inquisitio. Admirans enim Nathanael virtutem Dei in occultorum manifestatione, quia hoc solius Dei est: Ier. XVII, 9, *pravum est cor hominis, et inscrutabile, et quis cognoscet illud? Ego dominus scrutans cor et probans renes*; et I Reg. XVI, 7, *homines vident ea quae parent, Deus autem intuetur cor*, ideo quaerit *unde me nosti?* In quo commendatur Nathanaelis humilitas: quia licet laudaretur, non est elatus; sed laudem propriam suspectam habuit: contra quod dicitur Is. III, 12: *popule meus, qui beatum te dicunt, ipsi te decipiunt*.

Praeterita vero absentia insinuat, cum dicit *priusquam te Philippus vocaret, cum esses sub ficu, vidi te*, ubi primo ponitur denuntiatio Christi; secundo confessio Nathanaelis, ibi *respondit et Nathanael, et ait: Rabbi, tu es filius Dei*.

Circa primum sciendum est, quod Nathanael posset habere duplicem suspicionem de Christo: unam quod dixisset Christus praemissa, volens ei blandiri et ad amicitiam suam trahere; aliam quod ea quae dixit supra, ab alio cognovisset. Ut ergo suspicionem auferat, et ad altiora erigat, illa occulta manifestat quae nullus nisi divinitus scire potuisset, ea videlicet quae statim circa ipsum Nathanaelem contigerant: et hoc est quod dicit *priusquam te Philippus vocaret, cum esses sub ficu, vidi te*. Ad litteram enim, sub arbore fici fuerat Nathanael, cum a Philippo vocaretur: quod Christus virtute divinitatis coniecerat, quia, ut dicitur Eccli. XXIII, v. 28, *oculi domini multo lucidiores super solem*.

Mystice autem per ficum designatur peccatum: tum quia invenimus arborem fici maledictam folia sola habentem, et non fructum, Matth. XXI, 19 quod factum est in figuram peccati; tum quia Adam et Eva cum peccassent, de foliis ficus perizomata fecerunt. Dicit ergo *cum esses sub ficu*, idest, sub umbra peccati antequam ad gratiam vocatus esses, *ego vidi te*, scilicet oculo misericordiae: nam ipsa Dei praedestinatio oculo pietatis respicit praedestinos sub peccatis viventes; Eph. I, 4: *elegit nos ante mundi*

no need of a physician, for no one is born in such a way as not to need a physician; but he was praised by Christ because he admitted his sins.

324 Then when he says, **How do you know me?**, we have Nathanael's question. For Nathanael, in wonder at the divine power in this revelation of what is hidden, because this can only be from God—"The heart is depraved and inscrutable, and who is able to know it? I the Lord search the heart and probe the loins" (Jer 17:9); "Man sees the appearances, but the Lord sees the heart" (I Sin 16:7)—asks, **How do you know me?** Here we can recognize Nathanael's humility, because, although he had been praised, he did not become elated, but held this praise of himself suspect. "My people, who call you blessed, they are deceiving you" (Is 3:12).

325 Then he touches on matters in the past, saying, **Before Philip called you, I saw you when you were sitting under the fig tree**. First we have the statement of Christ; secondly, the confession of Nathanael.

326 As to the first, we should note that Nathanael might have had two misgivings about Christ. One, that Christ said this in order to win his friendship by flattery; the other, that Christ had learned what he knew from others. So, to remove Nathanael's suspicions and raise him to higher things, Christ reveals certain hidden matters that no one could know except in a divine way, that is, things that related only to Nathanael. He refers to these when he says, **Before Philip called you, I saw you when you were sitting under the fig tree**. In the literal sense, this means that Nathanael was under a fig tree when he was called by Philip—which Christ knew by divine power, for "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun" (Sir 23:28).

In the mystical sense, the fig tree signifies sin: both because we find a fig tree, bearing only leaves but no fruit, being cursed, as a symbol of sin (Mt 11:19); and because Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, made clothes from fig leaves. So he says here, when you were sitting under the fig tree, i.e., under the shadow of sin, before you were called to grace, I saw you, with the eye of mercy; for God's predestination looks upon the predestined, who are living under sin, with an eye of pity, for as Ephesians (1:4) says, "



*constitutionem* et cetera. Et de isto oculo loquitur hic. *Vidi te*, praedestinando scilicet ab aeterno.

Vel, secundum Gregorium, *cum esses sub ficu*, idest sub umbra legis, *vidi te*. Hebr. X, v. 1: *umbram habens lex futurorum bonorum* et cetera.

Statim autem Nathanael ad hoc conversus, et virtutem divinitatis in Christo cognoscens, in vocem confessionis et laudem prorumpit, dicens *Rabbi, tu es filius Dei*. Ubi tria considerat de Christo, scilicet plenitudinem scientiae, cum dicit *Rabbi*, quod interpretatur magister; ac si dicat, perfectus es in scientia. Iam praesentiebat quod dicitur Matth. XXIII, 10: *magister vester unus est, Christus*. Secundo excellentiam singularis gratiae, cum dicit *tu es filius Dei*. Nam quod homo sit filius Dei per adoptionem, non est nisi gratiae; et etiam esse filium Dei per unionem, quod est proprium homini Christo, per gratiam est: quia non ex aliquibus praecedentibus meritis, sed per gratiam unionis homo ille est filius Dei. Tertio vero immensitatem potentiae, cum dicit *tu es rex Israel*, idest expectatus ab Israel in regem et defensorem; Dan. VII, 14: *potestas eius, potestas aeterna* et cetera.

Sed circa hoc insurgit quaestio, secundum Chrysostomum. Cum Petrus, qui post multa miracula, post magnam doctrinam confessus fuit quod hic confitetur Nathanael de Christo, *tu es filius Dei*, meruit beatificari, dicente domino: *beatus es, Simon Bariona* etc., cur et Nathanael, qui simile dixerat ante visa miracula et perceptam doctrinam, beatificatus non fuit? Et ad hoc respondet Chrysostomus, quod huius causa est, quia licet eadem verba Nathanael et Petrus protulerint, non tamen fuit eadem intentio utriusque. Petrus quidem confessus fuit, Christum esse filium Dei verum per naturam, ut scilicet sic esset homo quod tamen esset verus Deus; hic autem confessus est esse filium Dei per adoptionem, secundum illud Ps. LXXXI, 6: *ego dixi: dii estis, et filii excelsi omnes*. Et hoc patet per verba sequentia. Si enim intellexisset eum esse filium Dei per naturam, non dixisset, *tu es rex Israel* solum, sed totius mundi. Hoc etiam patet, quia ad fidem Petri Christus nihil addidit, quasi perfectam existentem, sed Ecclesiam dixit se fabricaturum esse in confessione illius. Sed

He chose us before the foundation of the world.” And he speaks of this eye here: I saw you, by predestining you from eternity.

Or, the meaning is, according to Gregory: I saw you when **you were sitting under the fig tree**, i.e., under the shadow of the law. “The law has only a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1).

327 Hearing this, Nathanael is immediately converted, and, seeing the power of the divinity in Christ, breaks out in words of conversion and praise, saying, **Rabbi, you are the Son of God**. Here he considers three things about Christ. First, the fullness of his knowledge, when he says, **Rabbi**, which is translated as Teacher. As if to say: You are perfect in knowledge. For he had already realized what is said in Matthew (23:10): “You have one Teacher, the Christ.” Secondly, the excellence of his singular grace, when he says, **you are the Son of God**. For it is due to grace alone that one becomes a son of God by adoption. And it is also through grace that one is a son of God through union; and this is exclusive to the man Christ, because that man is the Son of God not due to any preceding merit, but through the grace of union. Thirdly, he considers the greatness of his power when he says, **you are the King of Israel**, i.e., awaited by Israel as its king and defender: “His power is everlasting” (Dn 7:14).

328 A question comes up at this point, according to Chrysostom. For since Peter, who after many miracles and much teaching, confessed what Nathanael confesses here about Christ, that is, you are **the Son of God**, merited a blessing, as the Lord said: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona” (Mt 16:17), why not the same for Nathanael, who said the same thing before seeing any miracles or receiving any teaching? Chrysostom answers that the reason for this is that even though Nathanael and Peter spoke the same words, the meaning of the two was not the same. For Peter acknowledged that Christ was the true Son of God by nature, i.e., he was man, and yet truly God; but Nathanael acknowledged that Christ was the Son of God by means of adoption, in the sense of, “I said: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High”(Ps 81:6). This is clear from what Nathanael said next: for if he had understood that Christ was the Son of God by nature, he would not have said, you are the King of Israel, but “of the whole world.” It is also

Nathanaelem, quasi maiori parte suae confessionis deficiente, elevat ad maiora, scilicet ad cognitionem divinitatis suae.

Unde dixit *maius his videbis*. Ubi notatur tertium, scilicet insinuatio futurorum, quasi dicat: quia dixi tibi praeterita, credis me esse filium Dei per adoptionem et regem Israel tantum, sed ducam te ad maiorem cognitionem, ut scilicet credas me filium Dei naturalem et regem omnium saeculorum. Et ideo sequitur *amen, amen dico vobis, videbitis caelum apertum, et Angelos Dei ascendentes et descendentes super filium hominis*, ubi, secundum Chrysostomum, vult probare dominus quod sit verus Dei filius, et Deus. Angelorum enim est proprium ministrare, et subiici, Ps. CII: *benedicite domino, omnes Angeli eius, ministri eius, qui facitis voluntatem eius*. Cum ergo videbitis quod Angeli administrabunt mihi, certum erit vobis quod sum verus filius Dei. Hebr. c. I, 6: *cum introducit primogenitum in orbem terrae, dicit: et adorent eum omnes Angeli Dei*.

Sed quando viderunt hoc apostoli? Viderunt, inquam, in passione, quando Angelus affuit illi, confortans eum, Lc. XXII, 43. Item in resurrectione, quando apostoli invenerunt duos Angelos stantes supra sepulcrum. Similiter in ascensione, quando dixerunt apostolis, Act. I, 11: *vir Galilaei, quid admiramini aspicientes in caelum? Hic Iesus qui assumptus est a vobis in caelum, sic veniet quemadmodum vidistis eum euntem in caelum*.

Et quia de praeteritis ei vera iam dixerat, magis ei credibile fuit quod praenuntiat de futuro, cum dicit *videbitis*. Evidens enim argumentum est vera dicere de futuris qui de occultis praeteritis manifestaverat veritatem. Dicit autem *super filium hominis Angelos ascendentes et descendentes*, quia secundum carnem mortalem paulo minoratus est ab Angelis: et intantum Angeli ascendunt et descendunt super eum; sed secundum quod est filius Dei, ipse super Angelos est, ut dictum est.

clear from the fact that Christ added nothing to the faith of Peter, since it was perfect, but stated that he would build the Church on that profession. But he raises Nathanael to greater things, since the greater part of his profession was deficient; to greater things, i.e., to a knowledge of his divinity.

329 And so he said, **You will** see greater **things than this**. Here we have, thirdly, an allusion to the future. As if to say: Because I have revealed the past to you, you believe that I am the Son of God only by adoption, and the King of Israel; but I will bring you to greater knowledge, so that you may believe that I am the natural Son of God, and the King of all ages. And accordingly he says, Amen, amen, I say to **you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man**. By this, according to Chrysostom, the Lord wishes to prove that he is the true Son of God, and God. For the peculiar task of angels is to minister and be subject: “Bless the Lord, all of you, his angels, his ministers, who do his will” (Ps 102:20). So when you see angels minister to me, you will be certain that I am the true Son of God. “When he leads his First-Begotten into the world, he says: ‘Let all the angels of God adore him’” (Heb 1:6).

330 When did the apostles see this? They saw it, I say, during the passion, when an angel stood by to comfort Christ (Lk 22:13); again, at the resurrection, when the apostles found two angels who were standing over the tomb. Again, at the ascension, when the angels said to the apostles: “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

331 Because Christ spoke the truth about the past, it was easier for Nathanael to believe what he foretells about the future, saying, **you will see**. For one who has revealed the truth about things hidden in the past, has an evident argument that what he is saying about the future is true. He says, **the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man**, because, in his mortal flesh, he was a little less than the angels; and from this point of view, angels ascend and descend upon him. But insofar as he is the Son of God, he is above the angels, as was said.

Secundum Augustinum autem, pulchre in verbis praedictis suam divinitatem manifestat. Legitur enim Gen. XXVIII, 12 quod *Iacob vidit scalam, et Angelos ascendentes et descendentes*. Et Iacob intelligens quid vidit, surgens unxit lapidem oleo, et deinde dixit: *vere dominus est in loco isto*. Lapis iste Christus est, quem reprobaverunt aedificantes; et est unctus oleo invisibili spiritus sancti; sed erigitur in titulum, quia futurus erat Ecclesiae fundamentum, ut dicitur I ad Cor. c. III, 11: *fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est*. Angeli autem ascendunt et descendunt, in quantum ei adsunt obsequendo et ministrando. Dixit ergo: *amen, amen dico vobis, videbitis caelum apertum* etc., quasi dicat: quia vere Israelita es, attende ad id quod Israel vidit, ut scilicet credas me illum esse qui est significatus per unctum lapidem a Iacob: nam tu etiam videbis super ipsum Angelos ascendentes et descendentes.

Vel Angeli sunt praedicatores, secundum Augustinum, praedicantes Christum; Is. XVIII, 2: *ite veloces Angeli ad gentem convulsam et dilaceratam*; qui quidem ascendunt per contemplationem, sicut Paulus ascenderat usque ad tertium caelum, ut dicitur II Cor. c. XII, 2, et descendunt per proximorum eruditionem *super filium hominis*, idest ad honorem Christi: quia, ut dicitur II Cor. IV, v. 5: *non enim praedicamus nos ipsos, sed Iesum Christum dominum nostrum*. Sed ut ascendant et descendant, apertum est caelum, quia oportet quod gratia caelestis detur praedicatoribus, ut ascendant et descendant. Ps. LXVII, 9: *caeli distillaverunt* etc.; Apoc. IV, v. 1: *postea vidi caelum apertum* et cetera.

Ratio autem quare Nathanael non eligitur in apostolum post tantam fidei confessionem, ista est, quia Christus noluit quod mundi conversio ad fidem ascriberetur humanae sapientiae, sed solum potentiae Dei. Et ideo non voluit Nathanaelem in lege peritissimum, in apostolum eligere; sed simplices et indoctos elegit; ut dicitur I Cor. I, 26: *non multi sapientes (...) sed quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus*.

332 According to Augustine, Christ is here revealing his divinity in a beautiful way. For it is recorded that Jacob dreamed of a ladder, standing on the ground, with “the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Gn 28:16). Then Jacob arose and poured oil on a stone and said, “Truly, the Lord is in this place” (Gn 28:16). Now that stone is Christ, whom the builders rejected; and the invisible oil of the Holy Spirit was poured on him. He is set up as a pillar, because he was to be the foundation of the Church: “No one can lay another foundation except that which has been laid” (1 Cor 3:11). The angels are ascending and descending inasmuch as they are ministering and serving before him. So he said, **Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened**, and so forth, as if to say: Because you are truly an Israelite, give heed to what Israel saw, so that you may believe that I am the one signified by the stone anointed by Jacob, for you also will see angels ascending and descending upon him [viz. Jesus].

333 Or, the angels are, according to Augustine, the preachers of Christ: “Go, swift angels, to a nation rent and torn to pieces,” as it says in Isaiah (18:2). They ascend through contemplation, just as Paul had ascended even to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2); and they descend by instructing their neighbor. **On the Son of Man**, i.e., for the honor of Christ, because “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:5). In order that they might ascend and descend, the heavens were opened, because heavenly graces must be given to preachers if they are to ascend and descend. “The heavens broke at the presence of God” (Ps 67:9); “I saw the heavens open” (Rv 4:1).

334 Now the reason why Nathanael was not chosen to be an apostle after such a profession of faith is that Christ did not want the conversion of the world to the faith to be attributed to human wisdom, but solely to the power of God. And so he did not choose Nathanael as an apostle, since he was very learned in the law; he rather chose simple and uneducated men. “Not many of you are learned,” and “God chose the simple of the world” (1 Cor 1:26).