



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.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

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 Matthew 7: 23-29

Ver. 23.—*And then will I confess unto them, &c.* "I Christ, will say unto the false prophets, who have taught and done miracles in My Name, in the Judgment Day, I knew you indeed as My prophets, who did miracles in My Name: but as My friends and sons whom I predestinated to the inheritance of My glory, I know you not. That is, I do not love and delight in you, because the will and law of My Heavenly Father, which ye taught unto others with your mouths, ye have not fulfilled in your deeds. Go ye therefore into everlasting fire, because ye have wrought iniquity." So says S. Augustine; and S. Gregory says, "Christ deserts them as unknown whom He did not know for the merit of their lives." (*Hom. 12 in Evangel.*) This knowledge therefore of God is not speculative, but practical, loving, and affectionate: as we are said to know those whom we love, and not to know those whom we dislike.

4. Christ confirmed His doctrine by miracles, which the Scribes could not do. Again Christ had a marvellous grace in speaking, according to those words of S. Matthew, "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."
5. The Scribes taught as interpreters of the Law, but Christ as a Lawgiver sent from heaven, with celestial wisdom and majesty. So Bede and Theophylact.
6. Christ in His teaching aimed only at the glory of God and the salvation of man. The Scribes sought their own glory and the applause of men.
7. Christ by His external teaching, and by His holy interior inspiration, and the light of grace, illuminated the minds and inflamed the affections of His hearers, and thereby made ignorant and stupid men learned, and those who were torpid and frigid fervent.

In these things then let the orator and preacher imitate Christ, and let him teach more by his life than his words, like S. Basil, of whom S. Gregory Nazianzen writes (*Orat.* 20), "A sermon of Basil's was like thunder, because his life was like lightning." S. Bernard, in his Life of S. Malachi, says that upon one occasion he rendered a certain enraged and furious woman, whose temper was perfectly intolerable to every one, so meek, that she did not even appear angry. And this he did by a word, saying to her, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, I bid thee be no longer angry." And this, S. Bernard thinks, was a greater miracle than raising a man from the dead, which was once performed by the same S. Malachi. "For in the one case it was but the outward man who lived again, in the other case it was the inward man."

Ver. 24.—*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, &c.* This is the Epilogue by which Christ concludes His lengthy Sermon on the Mount. It is as though He said—"Thus far have I taught you how ye ought to live wisely and holily according to the will and law of God, if ye wish to arrive at the kingdom of God and everlasting happiness. For this is the direct way to them, and other way there is none. Wherefore if ye do those things which I have taught you, ye *shall be like a prudent man who built his house upon the rock.* For it will resist all winds and storms which rush against it."

Christ here alludes to Prov. x. 25, "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." And ix. 1: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."

Observe, the spiritual house of the soul is the perfection of virtues, for as a material house is builded with much labour, and rises by degrees with various stones and beams, so is the spiritual house built up by various virtues and holy operations, and by long labour and slow degrees. The length of the house is long-suffering, its breadth is charity, its height, hope. The four walls are the four cardinal virtues, viz., Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. The pavement is humility; the roof, patience. The window is the desire of heavenly glory, through which the light of the Gospel finds an entrance. The door is obedience to the Commandments. The doorkeeper is holy fear. The watchmen are holy angels. The tower is contemplation. The mind or intellect is the master of the house. The husband is the will, the children are good works. The servants are the senses obedient to the mind. The table is Holy Scriptures, the bread is the Eucharist, the wine is the Blood of Christ, the living water is the Holy Ghost. The oil is mercy. The bed is a quiet and peaceable mind. The sacraments are medicine, priests are the physicians. The Guests are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. See S. Bernard (*Tract. de interiori Domo*).

Lastly, note here, as against the innovators, that faith, without the good works which faith prescribes to be done, will not suffice for salvation. For Christ here calls a foundation of sand faith alone conceived by hearing preaching, for this faith is like sand, dry and worthless: but the rock He calls faith solidified by good works. Note 2, the order which Christ employs. For 1, in verse 15, He taught the necessity of a right faith and true teachers; 2, in verse 21 *et seq.*, the necessity of good works and a holy life. Mystically the Rock is Christ, whence the *Gloss*, "He builds on Christ who does what he hears of Him."

Verse 25- *And the rain descended, &c.* The Arabic has, *for its foundations were made firm upon the rock.* The rain, wind, and rivers are all temptations and adversities whatsoever, whether coming from the world, the flesh, or the devil. They also mean the condemnation which Christ shall pronounce upon the wicked in the Day of Judgment. For this is often expressed in Scripture by the words *storm* and *Tempest*, as in Isaiah xxviii.

2, "Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand."

He then that is faithful to Christ and His law, being as it were founded by fear and love upon a most firm rock, cares not for the blasts of persecution, nor the gales of adulation, nor the zephyrs of flattery, nor the north winds of threats, nor the tempest of blows, but in his vocation and ministry stands unshaken in God. Thus like a crag or a rock, which on every side is beaten by the waves of the sea, so he continues unmoved and un-subdued. We have an example in S. Peter, who being set firm upon a rock, that is, the love of Christ, overcame all adverse things. Wherefore when he was commanded by the chiefs of the Sadducees (Acts iv. 18) to cease from preaching Christ, he answered, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

S. Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* 28) thus depicts the Christian philosopher: "There is a certain fabulous tree, which the more it is cut, the more it flourishes, and rises superior to the knife, which lives by death, and is propagated by cutting, and grows by being consumed." This, says the Scholiast, is not a fabulous, but a real tree. It is fulfilled in the vine, which, the more it is pruned, the more it sprouts and bears fruit. Nazianzen proceeds, "Thus of a truth is the philosopher. He flourishes amid torments; and he deems the troubles of life to be the harvest of virtue, and glories in adversity." And he concludes by showing that there are three things which are invincible—namely, God, an angel, and a philosopher. Two of these cannot be severed, or plucked asunder, God and an angel. The third is a philosopher; in matter devoid of matter, un-circumscribed by the body, heavenly while on earth, impassible amid sufferings, easily giving himself to be overcome by all things, except that through greatness of mind, in that wherein he suffers himself to be overcome, he overcomes those who seem to have overcome him.

Ver. 26.—*And whose heareth these sayings of mine, &c.* Rightly is the instability and disobedience of him who heareth the words of Christ and doeth them not likened unto sand. For, 1. Sand is soft and shifting, so that it cannot afford a solid and durable foundation. 2. Sand is dry; and so the unstable mind which doeth not that which it heareth is dry and empty of virtue and the moisture of the Divine Spirit. 3. Sand is blown about by the wind and dispersed into all quarters; so too a light and inconstant mind is carried into every sort of concupiscence by every breath of desire and temptation. 4. As sand is very fine and composed of millions of little grains, so the unstable heart is filled with a thousand cogitations and desires after vain and trifling things.

Tropologically, the foolish and worldly person builds upon sand, *i.e.*, says Salmeron, upon creatures, who like sand are barren for good, and in a state of fluidity, so as to fall away into sin, and shaken by the waves because they are agitated by labours and temptations. For as sand is dry, or bibulous and insatiable, so creatures cannot satisfy the soul of man. Sand is also very numerous; so likewise the wicked are innumerable, and "infinite is the company of fools." Sand therefore denotes all the people of the

devil—sterile, and by no means united, whereas the people of God are strong and united like a rock. For though many be called, few are chosen.

Verse 27- *And the rain descended, &c.* Rain denotes the temptation of the world; rivers, of the flesh; the winds, of the devil. For rain coming down from on high, and causing the earth to swell and making it fruitful, denotes ambition of honours and the desire of wealth, which the world offers to the vain and inconstant man, whereby he is made to depart from the law of God, and fall away from the faith. Rivers, or floods which arise out of the earth, denote the temptations of the flesh, as gluttony and lust, which have their origin in the flesh itself, so to say. Winds, which from the atmosphere blow against the house laterally and invisibly, denote the temptations of the devil, who is an invisible spirit, and the prince of the power of the air. For he insinuates, and as it were blows into our fancy a thousand depraved thoughts and desires, and they are so subtil that sometimes thou knowest not whether they come from an angel, or the devil. For Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.

Ver. 28.—*And it came to pass, &c.* Here then is concluded Christ's whole Sermon upon the Mount containing the whole law and perfection of the Gospel. And although the precepts given are dispersed, yet are they all connected. And if any one desires to learn the order and connection which exists amongst them let him read Bellarmine (lib. 4, *de Justific.*)

Verse 29- *For he taught them, &c.* That is, *He was accustomed to teach, &c.*
1. Because Christ taught important matters with great authority, matters of the highest moment for salvation, and the Truth itself. But the Scribes taught with levity, trifling matters, such as rites and ceremonies, washings of the hands and of cups.

2. Because what Christ taught in word, that He fulfilled in deed. For great authority is added to the doctrine of the teacher when he performs the good which he enjoins. "Protracted," says Seneca, "is the road to virtue through precepts; short and effectual through example." Here S. Gregory (*23 Moral.*7): "That is indeed taught with authority which is acted before it is spoken. For we take away from confidence in our doctrine when conscience impedes the tongue. Whence also it is written of the Lord, 'He taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.' For peculiarly and above all He spoke only from a good power, because He had done no evil through weakness. From the power of His Divinity He had that which He ministered unto us through the innocence of His humility.

3. Christ taught with great spirit and fervour, with great persuasive force and efficacy; the Scribes coldly and superficially.