

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 7: 38-53

Ver. 38.—*He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, i.e., as he ought, by faith, moulded by love: he that so believeth as also to obey Me and My commands.*

Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Where is this said? (1.) Rupertus, S. Thomas, and S. Jerome say in Prov. v. i6, "Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad." (2.) F. Lucas in Is. Iviii. 8, "Thou shalt be like a watered garden." (3.) Others say that it is stated not in one place, but in many, for the prophets everywhere foretell that the abundance of spiritual gifts which Christ would give, would be like showers of water. See Joel ii. 28; Is. xli. 18, xliv. 3. See also Ezek. xxxvi. 25, and Eccclus. xxiv. 40, Vulg., "I wisdom poured forth rivers," &c. (In Angl. verses 30, 31), and Cant. iv. 15, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."

Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Rivers (say S. Ambrose and Theophylact), not a river, to denote the greatest abundance, force and efficacy of spiritual graces, as *e.g.*, rivers of charity, of virginity, of martyrdoms and martyrs, of

cloke of simulation, he was a kind of secret defender of Christ. Though it is the duty of believers without fear or shame to profess the true faith, as S. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," &c. (Rom. i. 16).

Ver. 52.—*They answered, &c.* And thou, as being of the same country, dost thou favour and defend Him?

Search (the Scriptures, Vulg.) and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

1. They reply insolently, as though he knew not the Scriptures. Attend to us and learn. "They insult him," says Theophylact; "go and learn, for up to this time thou hast not learned that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." This was not true. For Deborah was of Galilee (Judges iv. 4-6), and Anna of the tribe of Aser (Luke ii. 36), and Nahum the Elkoshite from Elkosh, a city in Galilee. And in Samaria which adjoined Galilee there were many Prophets, as Elijah, Elisha, and the hundred which Obadiah hid in a cave.

2. It is rash to assert that because, up to that time, no Prophet had arisen from Galilee, none would afterwards arise.

3. It was foolish, because Nicodemus had never said that Jesus was a Prophet, but merely that He should not be condemned without being heard; but they were so blinded by hatred, as to do many rash and foolish things contrary to reasonable judgment.

Ver. 53.—*And every one went to his own house.* "Fearing lest any one else should support Nicodemus," says Euthymius. They therefore deferred their intention of killing Jesus, but did not revoke it. God brought about this delay, by means of Nicodemus, because the ordained hour had not come.

blame those who had sent them to seize Him, whom they ought rather to have listened to. Why sent ye us to seize so great a teacher? We have been captivated by the power of His words, and ye, if ye had heard Him yourselves, would have been captivated also. They spake not to please their masters, but to witness to the truth. Such is the power of truth. It is therefore probable that many of them were afterwards fully converted to Christ at Pentecost. For God seems to have rewarded in this way their sincere and noble testimony to Christ. "They were laudably led astray," says the Gloss, "in passing over to the faith from the evil of unbelief." S. Cyril supposes that they suspected Him to be God. "How then could we take Him, who is as far above us as God is above man?"

Ver. 47.—*The Pharisees therefore answered, Are ye also deceived? "They were Christ's implacable enemies,"* says Nonnus. "When they ought to have felt compunction, and to change their opinion," says Chrysostom, "they accuse the officers. But in mild terms, for fear they also should at the last fail them." But they ought to have asked what there was so wonderful in Jesus' words. But they took care not to do that, by their blind and obstinate hatred against Him. S. Cyril enforces it thus, "We may pardon the multitude for being deceived, but how could ye, who are our officers, and infected with the same incredulity with ourselves, how could you be so quickly led astray as to believe in Him?"

Ver. 48.—*Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him?* And consequently He is not the Christ. An argument from authority, but yet a fallacy. For these rulers and Pharisees were the sworn enemies of Christ, because He reprov'd their sins. But yet some of the rulers secretly believed in Him, as Nicodemus. As S. Augustine wisely says, "They who knew not the law, believed on Him who had sent the law, and they who taught the law despised Him who had sent it, that the saying might be fulfilled, "I am come that they which see not may see, and that they which see might be made blind."

Ver. 49.—*But this people who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* In passing, *i.e.*, from Moses and the law to Jesus and the gospel. By this term the Pharisees endeavour to terrify the officers and others, and to turn them away from the faith and love of Jesus. "They are deserving" (says Theophylact) "of many curses for being unbelieving themselves, and the authors of unbelief in others." As says S. Cyril, "Wise men by boasting become fools. For while they profess that they know the law, they accuse themselves of unbelief," and of ignorance also, in not acknowledging Christ, who was promised by the law, and who then stood before them. (See Deut. xviii. 19.)

Vers. 50, 51.—*Nicodemus saith unto them, &c.* The law of Moses, (Deut. xiv. 14) and the law of nature,—Nicodemus accuses his colleagues of being the violators of both laws. But he does so in a quiet way, for fear of their anger. For, as S. Augustine saith, "For he hoped if they would only hear Him patiently, they would become like those officers who were sent to take Christ, but preferred to believe on Him." And further Cyril asserts that Nicodemus said this as pricked by his conscience. Still labouring under a fatal bashfulness, and not combining boldness of speech with his zeal, he exposes not to view the faith which was inherent in him. But vesting himself in a

wisdom and of Christian eloquence. So S. Chrysostom, Rupertus, and others. S. Gregory (*Hom. x. on Ezek.*) saith: "Because holy teachings flow from the minds of the faithful, as streams of living waters from the belly of believers. For what is the belly, but the inner feelings of the mind, that is, right intention, holy desire, and a will which is humble towards God, and loving to its neighbour?"

"Consider," says S. Chrysostom, "the eloquence of Peter, the vehemence of Paul, and the wisdom of Stephen, for nothing escapes them as they speak, but they all go on as hurried forward by impetuously rushing streams." As was the case at Pentecost, when .Peter poured forth the streams of his spirit, and by one discourse converted three, and by another five, thousand Jews to Christ. And hence S. Jerome (*Ep. lxi. to Pammacheus*) saith, "Paul was a chosen vessel, a trumpet of the Gospel, a roaring of a lion, a torrent of Christian eloquence: for as oft as I read him methinks I hear not words but thunders." And S. Chrysostom saith, "Paul is the heaven which hath the sun of righteousness, being himself a most pure and most profound sea of wisdom" (*Hom. vi. de laudibus S. Pauli*). But observe that Christ is the fount of living water, that is of living and quickening grace, "For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 9), and if we drink of this fountain (*i.e.*, if we believe in Christ and obey Him), He will be in us a fountain of water springing up into eternal life (see John iv. 14). This fountain is the Holy Spirit, or His abundant and plenteous grace. And from this fountain dwelling in the soul, the countless and most perfect spiritual gifts and virtues flow, like rivers and streams, into the soul and body, into all their powers and acts, and reach even to those about them. For "the grace of the Spirit," saith Chrysostom, "when it enters and waters the mind, fertilises it more than any stream; it never fails, never falls short, never stops." He therefore speaks of its indefectible abundance, and its wondrous operation, as a fountain and stream.

"Faith, hope, and charity are streams of the Holy Spirit," says S. Gregory, as S. John explains it below.

Out of his belly. That is, the heart and mind. "The belly" (says S. Augustine) "is the conscience of the heart, for purified by this water, it will be itself a fountain. But the fountain is benevolence, which seeks the good of its neighbour, and therefore is not dried up, but ever flows.

Shall flow. Abundantly, in virtuous acts, by the operations and impulses of the Holy Spirit, to lead not only themselves but others also to heaven. For the spring of this spiritual stream is in heaven, and it flows back to its original source, and carries back thither spiritual men with it (*see chap. iv. 14*).

Living waters. Not stagnant waters, but flowing and springing up. Abundance of living waters. (1.) Charity (S. Augustine). (2.) Spiritual joy (see Ps. xlvii.) (S. Basil). (3.) Evangelical doctrine (S. Ambrose). (4.) Heavenly happiness and glory, which S. John compares to the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 1). (5.) A fount of all grace and glory, all gifts of the Holy Spirit (so S. Chrysostom, Cyril, Origen, &c.)

Ver. 39.—*But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.* After His death, and by His merits at Pentecost, for before that the Apostles had not received it so copiously and abundantly as at that time; and they at once watered the parched earth by the streams of their preaching and virtue, fertilised it by their good works, inebriated it by the love of God, and inundated it with all virtues, by means of the living water of Christian grace, life, and doctrine.

For the Spirit was not yet given, i.e., the Holy Spirit was not yet given so copiously, *because Jesus was not yet glorified.* But why was not the Holy Spirit given visibly and abundantly before His Ascension? (1.) S. Leo says, “In order that this gift and pouring forth of the Holy Spirit might be acknowledged as the fruit of His Passion, Ascension and Triumph. Just as kings give largesses to their people on occasions of great joy, as triumphs and so forth. (See Acts ii. 33.) “His Ascension” (says S. Leo) “was the cause of His giving His Holy Spirit.” (2.) The sending of the Spirit was the glorification of Christ. For the Spirit by the greatness of His gifts wondrously set forth the glory of Christ. For He wrought so many miracles by the Apostles, as to convert the whole world to Christ. (3.) Because the disciples before the Ascension were not able to receive so great a gift, having such carnal notions of Christ. (4.) S. Augustine (*in 1oc*), “He willed not to give the Spirit till after His Resurrection, in order that our charity might glow for the Resurrection, and being separated from the world may run wholly towards Him.” And S. Cyril, “Christ then became the Principle of our renewed nature, when, counting as nothing the bands of death, He rose again.” And again, “There was in the Prophets a certain rich brightness of the Holy Spirit, and a light shining before them, to guide them to the knowledge of things to come. But to those who believed in Christ, there was not only the Holy Spirit, as a light to lead them on the way, but He dwelt within them, as if in His temple.”

For then streams of grace not only flowed, but poured down from heaven, not merely on a few, but on very many of the faithful. From thence there flowed forth such thousands of martyrs, who nobly endured the rack, the flames and the lions; so many bands of virgins victoriously contending even to death for their Christian virginity; so many swarms of monks and anchorites who in monasteries and deserts lived separate from the world and for God, as men of heaven, and angels upon earth; so many orders of Pontiffs and Prelates, who governed most holily the churches committed to them, and moulded them to perfect sanctity; such bands of Doctors, Preachers and Confessors, who scattered on every side their streams of doctrine and holy living, by their teaching, preaching and writings, enlightening the whole world with the knowledge of God, and enkindling it by His love; of whom it is said, “He shall pour forth as showers his wise sentences” (Ecclus. xxxix. 6). And lastly, so many myriads of the faithful, both men and women, who living soberly, justly and godly in this world,

eagerly looked, and still look for the glorious coming of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Is not this great and unending glory to Jesus Christ?

Ver. 42.—*Doth not the Scripture say, &c.* As Micah foretold. But Jesus is not the Christ as having been conceived and brought up at Nazareth. But He was born at Bethlehem, and since they had seen so many evident signs of His Messiahship, they were bound to inquire more carefully into this point which seemed to be wanting. And had they done so, they would have understood the truth, and would have known that His being a Galilean was no objection to His being the Christ; but the people from indolence, and the Scribes from envy of Him, would not investigate the matter, and were both accordingly inexcusable.

Ver. 43.—*So there was a division among the people because of Him.* Some accusing Him of being an innovator, others excusing Him, and lauding Him as a Prophet.

Ver. 44.—*And some of them would have taken Him, i.e.,* some of the multitude, not of the rulers, who were all of one mind not to acknowledge Him. But the officers who were sent for the purpose wished to apprehend Him.

But no man laid hands on Him. For Christ withheld them by His power of spirit, and the majesty of His countenance, much more by His Divine Power. And, moreover, the hour for His suffering had not yet come. So Cyril.

Ver. 45.—*The officers therefore came, &c.* As to the masters who had sent them. *And they said unto them, Why have ye not brought Him?* Their coming was a greater thing than to have remained with Christ, for they would thus have been spared annoyance from them, but now they became heralds of Christ, and became more bold in their bearing, says S. Chrysostom.

Him, that innovator, deceiver, and false prophet. They deigned not to call Jesus by His own name.

Ver. 46.—*The officers answered, &c.* Because He was God-man, and therefore He teaches not with human but Divine grace, power efficacy and majesty. Notice here the force of Christ’s words, His authority and dignity, which astounded these officers, who, though willing, were not able to take Him, nay were obliged to love, reverence and honour Him; and to profess as much to their masters though most hostile to Christ. “Proving,” says Cyril, “how rash and weak it is to fight against Christ.” “They might certainly have excused themselves (says S. Chrysostom) “by saying we dared not take Him, lest we should rouse to sedition against ourselves the multitude who favoured Him.” For they seemed not so much to admire Him, as to