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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 23: 35-39

Verse 35- *That upon you may come, &c., righteous blood.* That is, of the righteous men who have exhorted others to live justly and holily, both by word and example. Whence S. Luke has, *the blood of the Prophets*; for a *Prophet* in Scripture frequently denotes a just and holy man. S. Austin gives the reason for what Christ says in this verse, "Because the imitation of wicked men causes people to obtain not only their own deserts, but the deserts of those whom they imitate." Moreover S. Chrysostom says, "Even as the rewards which all the preceding generations deserved were bestowed upon those who received Christ, so what their wicked ancestors merited came upon the latest Jews."

Which was shed, &c. Because, although Cain, who slew his brother Abel, was not a Jew by race, yet by his wickedness in killing righteous Abel he afforded an example to the Jews, who were most prone to follow it, in killing the holy Prophets. Thus Cain the fratricide was not the natural, but the symbolical father of the Jews who slew their

I say then that Christ is here speaking, concerning the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. This is the opinion of S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, S. Augustine (*de consens. Evang. lib. 2, cap. 75*). As though He had said, "You, O ye Scribes, who constantly contradict and calumniate Me, saying that I am not the Messiah, but that I cast out devils by Beelzebub, *shall not see Me from by and by*, that is, after the few days before My death, in which I shall be conversant among you, until the Judgment Day, when ye shall be compelled, even against your will, to acknowledge Me as Messiah, the Son of God, and your Judge as well as the Judge of all men; and to cry Hosanna, if not with your outward lips, at least in your hearts and minds, though against your will. Then shall ye see that I was, and am Blessed, I who came in the Name of the Lord, inasmuch as I was sent by God the Father to redeem and save all mankind, then, I say, when ye ought to have worshipped and adored Me."

Secondly, it is possible that this passage may be understood of the Jews, who about the end of the world shall be converted to Christ by the preaching of Elias, and who, when He shall presently come to judgment, will acknowledge Him to be Messiah, the Blessed of the Lord. As though He said, "You, O ye Jews, do not wish to acknowledge Me as Messiah, and persecute Me as a false Christ, even unto death; but your posterity in the end of the world will acknowledge and worship Me. On them, therefore, I will bestow My grace and glory, but you I will condemn to everlasting punishment. And this will be to my praise and honour and glory, but to your shame and everlasting contempt." Thus does Christ prick the hard and unbelieving hearts of the Jews. This was prophesied by Osee iii. 4, &c., to which Christ here makes allusion.

Tropologically: a hen is the Church and her Priests. For, as Auctor Imperfecti says, "As a hen that hath young ones does not cease to call them, but with assiduous clucking checks their straying away; so also ought Priests not to cease by their teaching and zeal to correct the negligence of an erring people. And as a hen that hath chickens not only warns her own young ones, but even loves as her own the young of any bird excluded from those to whom they belong; so likewise does the Church not only study to call her own Christians, but Gentiles and Jews also, if they be brought to her; she quickens them all with the warmth of her faith. She regenerates them in baptism, she nourishes them by preaching, and she loves them with maternal charity."

7. There exists the figure of a *hen* with the motto, "Where Christ has been received, there is nothing sad." Also,

8. The eggs of *hens* are said to be useful in various complaints, such as pains in the eyes and gout. So likewise is Christ the best Physician of all the infirmities of souls.

9. When a *hen* is in any peril which threatens herself alone, as from a kite, or a cat or dog, she flees. But if she fears danger for her young ones, she gathers them under her wings, and strives to protect them by every means in her power. She will often fight for them with her wings, her beak, and her whole body. So Christ fought for us against the devil and sin unto death, even the death of the cross.

And ye would not: because ye will pursue Me with hatred even unto death, and will not suffer your citizens to be converted unto Me and your God. This, as I have already observed, is especially addressed to the Scribes and rulers.

Verse 38- *Behold your house, &c.* That is, the Temple, says S. Jerome and Theophylact; but more correctly, the city of Jerusalem and the whole region of Judea, which, as the punishment of such black ingratitude, was to be laid waste by the Romans, under Titus. There is an allusion to Jer. xii. 7, "I have left my house, I have forsaken my inheritance." For when Jerusalem was forsaken by God, it became the synagogue of Satan, and so the prey of the Roman eagles under Titus and Vespasian, who partly slew the Jews, partly led them away captive, and partly scattered them over the whole world.

Verse 39- *For I say unto you, &c.* "I will withdraw Myself from you into Heaven; and ye shall see Me no more upon earth, until the Day of judgment, when I will condemn your unbelief." Some take this verse to refer to Christ's solemn entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when the Jews cried aloud to Him, *Hosanna, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.* But this is clearly an erroneous opinion, for this triumphal entry was already past, as is plain from chap. xxi. 1, &c. These words were spoken by Christ after Palm Sunday, three days before His crucifixion. So the Fathers and Commentators, *passim.*

brethren, Christ and the Prophets. By a like analogy the devil is called the father of all the proud and the wicked.

The Jews, even though they knew the Divine vengeance which pursued Cain's fratricide, not only imitated it, but far transcended it by slaying Christ, the Son of God, and His Apostles. We may add, that although Cain was not a direct forefather of the Jews, he was one of their collateral ancestors. He was the brother of Seth, from whom Abraham and the Jews were sprung. But the posterity of Seth married the daughters of Cain, as Abulensis saith (*Quæst.* 260) (see Gen. vi. 2). This is probable, but not certain. All that Scripture says is, that from them the giants were sprung, who were the cause of the Deluge, in which they perished. But it does not say that other children were not sprung from them.

There were persons who praised this fratricide of Cain, and for that reason were called Cainites, as S. Augustine says (*lib. de hæres. c. 18*), "The Cainites are so called because they honour Cain, saying that he was a man of the greatest virtue." They also think that the traitor Judas was something divine, and account his wickedness a benefit. They assert that he knew beforehand how great a benefit the Passion of Christ would be to the human race, and for that reason betrayed Him to the Jews to be put to death. They are also said to honour the Sodomites, and those who made a schism amongst the ancient people, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Zacharias the son of Barachias. You will ask who was this Zacharias? There are three opinions. The first that of S. Chrysostom (*Hom. de Joan. Bapt.*), Vatablus, Arias Montanus, &c. They think that he was the Zachariah, the last but one of the twelve minor Prophets. For he was the son of Barachiah, but we nowhere read that he was slain between the Temple and the altar. The second and more probable opinion is, that he was the Zachariah who was the son of Jehoiada, who, with base ingratitude, was slain in an awfully sacrilegious manner by King Joash in the most holy place,—that is to say, in the court of the Priests, which was between the Temple, or the holy place, and the altar of burnt-offering; for this altar was in the court of the Priests (*2 Chron. xxiv. 21*). So Abul. (*Quæst.* 215), S. Jerome, Bede, Tertullian (*Scorpiace, c. 3*), "Zachariah is slain between the Temple and the altar, marking the stones with indelible spots of blood." For although there were other Prophets slain by the Jews after Zachariah, he is the last whose murder is related in Scripture. Add to this that Scripture makes mention only of the blood of Abel and this Zacharias as crying for vengeance. Of Abel's it is said (*Gen. iv. 10*), "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." And of Zacharias (*2 Chron. xxiv. 22*), "Who, when he was dying, said, 'The Lord look upon it, and require it.'" Chrysostom says, "He makes mention of Abel to show that they would kill Christ and His Apostles out of envy, as from envy Cain slew Abel; of Zacharias, because the holy man was slain in the holy place."

You will say, this Zacharias was the son of Jehoiada, not of Barachias. S. Jerome answers that Jehoiada was also called Barachiah, perhaps because Barachiah in Hebrew signifies “the blessed of the Lord.” And it is plain that Jehoiada, who was a very holy man, was such. S. Jerome adds, “In the Gospel which the Nazarenes make use of, we find, instead of *the son of Barachias, the son of Jehoiada.*”

The third opinion is, that this Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist, concerning whom there is a tradition that he was slain by the Jews because he proclaimed the advent of Christ, saying in his Canticle, “And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways;” and because he had hidden his son John from Herod, the murderer of the innocents, who sought to kill him on account of the miracles which happened at his birth. For this Zacharias was the last of the Prophets. For John, his son, was rather an index to a present Christ than a Prophet of a future one. Again, that this Zacharias was the son of Barachias is attested by S. Hippolytus, the martyr, who is cited by Nicephorus (*H. E. ii. 3*). S. Jerome rejects this as apocryphal; but the same thing is asserted by S. Cyril, against the Anthropomorphites, Peter of Alexandria (*in regula Eccles. can. 3*), S. Epiphanius (*lib. de vit. et obit. Prophet.*), Baronius (*in apparat. Ann.*), S. Thomas (*in Catena*). Origen, Theophylact, Euthymius, and S. Basil (*Hom. de humana Christi generat.*) add that this Zacharias was slain by the Jews because, after the birth of Christ, he placed the Blessed Virgin as a virgin among the virgins in the Temple. But this is difficult to be believed, for reasons given by Baronius and Abulensis.

Verse 36- *Verily I say, &c.* The vengeance for these crimes of My death and the death of My Apostles and others shall come upon the Jews under Titus.

Verse 37- *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, &c.* He repeats *Jerusalem* twice, to express the depth of His grief and compassion. It is as though He said, “O Jerusalem, city of God, chosen by Him and beloved above all other cities, which He has adorned with so many graces and benefits,—the law, the Temple, priesthood, doctrine, enriched with a kingdom, Prophets, miracles,—thou hast always been ungrateful for all these things. Thou hast slain the Prophets, and soon thou wilt kill Me and My Apostles. Wherefore thou hast become a wicked and lost city, destined by God to be destroyed and burnt by the Romans.” By *city*, the inhabitants, especially the Priests and magistrates, who chiefly were guilty of the blood of the Prophets, are meant.

That killest the prophets. S. Luke says that Christ added, *it cannot be that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem:* it was the appropriate work of Jerusalem to kill the Prophets. *How often have I wished,* formerly by the Prophets, and now by Myself and the Apostles, to gather into My bosom, to bring back to the one God and the one faith, *thy sons*,—that is, thy citizens, who are scattered unto various errors, and are hurling themselves into the perils of Gehenna. For nothing disperses like sin, and nothing so gathers us to God as virtue, says Theophylact.

As a hen gathereth her chickens, wandering in different directions, *under her wings,* to cherish and warm them, and defend them from the hawk.

Christ compares Himself, and His love and solicitude to save the Jews, to a *hen* cherishing her *chickens* under her wings. First, because *hens* love their young ones above all other birds, and manifest the greatest care and protection over them, says S. Chrysostom. Thus a *hen* calls and clucks, so that even if she cannot see her *chickens*, they may recognise their mother by her call. Whilst sparrows, swallows, storks, are only recognised by the parent birds whilst they are in their nests. Christ has loved us with supremest love, “being made Himself,” says S. Hilary, “as it were, an earthly and domestic bird, being anxiously solicitous for us all through His life, teaching, sighing, and groaning, in order that He might save us.”

2. Neither sparrows, nor thrushes, nor ducks, nor any other birds become so weak when they have young as the *hen* does, whose voice “becomes hoarse,” says S. Augustine (*in Ps. 59*): “the whole body becomes neglected, the wings droop, the feathers become loose, and all this is the effect of maternal love. Thus Christ gathered all nations, like a *hen* her chickens, Who became weak for our sakes, receiving flesh from us, that is, from Human nature, was crucified, despised, slapped with the hand, beaten, hung on the cross, wounded with a lance. Therefore this is of maternal infirmity, not loss of majesty, that inasmuch as He shared with us in our infirmity, He might release us from our sins.”

3. The same Augustine says on the words in the 91st Psalm, “Thou shalt be safe under his feathers,” “If a hen protects her young ones under wings, how much rather shalt thou be safe under the wings of God, against the devil and his angels, who fly round about like hawks, that they may carry off the young chickens.”

4. The word in the Greek for hen is *ὄρνις*, which is a generic name for any bird, but the Vulg. does well to translate it by *gallina, a hen*. For, as S. Augustine says, it is wonderful what love almost all birds, but especially the hen, show in cherishing and protecting their young.

5. A *hen* with a branch of rue under her wings, says Pierias, is the hieroglyphic of security. Afranius, in the particulars which Constantine ordered to be collected about agriculture, says that hens will be safe from the cat if a little bunch of wild rue be tied under one of their wings. Democritus says further, that the same herb will protect them from foxes, and from every other hostile animal. Such security, only in a far higher degree, does Christ afford to His people.

6. A *hen* is the symbol of fruitfulness. It often lays an egg a day, and sometimes two in a day. And one egg occasionally produces two chickens. What is more fruitful than Christ?

Again, a *cock* and a *hen* are the symbol of watchfulness and guardianship. What is more watchful than Christ?