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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 26: 51-67

Verse 51- *And behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched forth his hand, and struck the servant of the high priest.* Peter, that is, who was more fervent and resolute than the others. S. Luke adds that he first asked permission from Christ, "Shall we smite with the sword?" but waited not for His answer, and in his zeal for Christ in His imminent danger drew his sword.

A question is raised, what was this sword ? merely a knife (*culter*), or a military sword (*ensis*), or an ordinary sword (*gladius*)? The Fathers are in favour of *ensis*. S. Hilary says that the sword was ordered to be sheathed, because He was about to destroy them with no human sword, but with the word of His mouth (Rev. i. 16, xix. 15). S. Ambrose explains the two swords (Luke xxii. 38) mystically, as the Old and New Testaments, with which we are armed against the wiles of the devil.

But writers on all sides explain these two swords allegorically as the twofold power of

some, too, of the Council (as S. Mark implies), spat upon Him.

On that Divine face, worthy of reverence and adoration from all creatures, on which the angels desire to look. This was an atrocious insult inflicted by the vilest men on Christ the Son of God, who here exhibited stupendous gentleness, humility, and patience, and fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (ii. 6), "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that pluck off the hair." Whence Forerius says that the plucking of the beard was a great pain and insult, like spitting in the face. Whence S. Clement Alex (*Pæd.* iii. 3) says "it is a monstrous thing to pluck off the hair, which is man's natural beauty."

Whence Euthymius says, "Shudder, ye heavens and earth, and all creation; for what face was it on which they inflicted such insults?" And so S. Chrysostom, and Titus Bostrensis after him, "They spat on that face which the waves of the sea feared, on seeing which on the Cross the sun hid his rays; they smote it, fully satisfying their anger, inflicting the most insulting wounds, thrusting their hands into His face, &c. But why did they beat Him when they were about to kill Him? What need was there for such insults? But their cruelty was manifest in all they did, like hunters who vent their rage on the prey they have at length found, counting it a pleasure and festive sport, and showing how eager they were for cruelty."

S. Anselm (*de Pass. Dom.*) introduces the Blessed Virgin as thus saying, "After a little while my Son appeared covered with spittle as with leprosy;" and speaking of His scourging says, "My Son was so benumbed and disfigured, that He appeared as though struck with leprosy."

They buffeted Him. A buffet (*colaphus*) is a blow struck with the fist on the neck or head; a blow (*alapa*) is given with the flat of the hand on the cheek, inflicting greater insult, but less pain than the blow (*colaphus*).

But others struck Him in the face with their hands. Some translate *ζαπίς* as a rod or a slipper. But here, by a misuse of words, it means "a blow." Christ is therefore here accused as impious,—struck with the hand, as impudent; speaks as the Lord, is silent as innocent; is condemned as sacrilegious; is smitten with fists, "though He measures out the waters with the hollow of His hand" (Isa. xl.). His countenance, the brightness of His Father's glory, is disfigured with blows. His eyes are veiled who lays bare the secrets of the hearts and looks into all thoughts. He is insulted, beaten, and assailed with scoffs, and has His hair torn out.

the Church, temporal and spiritual (see *Extrav. "Unam sanctam" De Majoritate et obedientia*). And again by the sword is denoted excommunication, which cuts off a man from the Church.

Many think that Peter intended to kill Malchus, but that God guided the blow so that he merely cut off his ear.

Tropologically: S. Ambrose by this sword understands martyrdom. "There is," saith he, "the sword of suffering, by which thou canst cast off the body, and purchase for thyself the crown of a martyr by putting off the slough of the body." Cornelius urges many reasons why it should be a sword, and not merely a knife which S. Peter used, adding that the sword of Peter is still preserved, and exposed to the veneration of the faithful.

A servant of the high Priest, named Malchus (John xviii. 10). S. Peter seems to have attacked him, as being the most bold and forward in assailing Christ.

Cut off his ear. His right ear, say S. John and S. Luke, signifying, as Origen says, that the Jews in reading and hearing Scriptures had lost their right ear, the true understanding of heavenly things.

S. Augustine (*Contr. Faust.* xxii. 70) remarks that Moses, after he had smitten the Egyptian, was made the head of the Synagogue. S. Peter, after mutilating Malchus, was made the head of the Church. Both of them went beyond bounds, not from hateful cruelty, but from blameless impetuosity. For Peter sinned through rashness, for it was without the knowledge, rather against the will of Christ that he drew his sword, his sole means of defending Christ against so many armed men, and in cutting off Malchus' ear he provoked them the rather against Christ. But he showed his ardour and zeal for Christ, blameable as it was; and when this fault had been corrected at Pentecost, he obtained through Him to be the Pastor and Prince of the Church.

Christ by blaming and restraining S. Peter, and by healing Malchus' ear, manifested most strikingly His power and clemency. Especially since it is a theological dogma (as *Paulus de Palatio* adds) that when the Lord heals, He heals perfectly. If Christ healed Malchus both in body and mind, what greater proof could there be of charity, what stronger evidence of an undisturbed mind? It is clear from Acts ii. 37 that many of these persecutors of Christ were converted. And what marvel if Malchus were, who had experienced so striking an evidence of Christ's goodness and power? Christ thus acted that He might furnish no ground for the charge that He had opposed the public ministers of justice, and also to exhibit a pattern of forbearance and gentleness, as He did when He converted Saul into Paul. Mystically, the Gloss says that the wounding and healing of

Malchus' ear is the restoration of hearing, when the old man is taken away, for slavery is the old estate, healing is liberty.

Verse 52- *Then Jesus saith to him, Put up again thy sword into his place.* Christ here reproves Peter's rashness in drawing his sword against His wish. Peter's sin, then, was twofold: first in striking against Christ's wish, and next, because this was an act not so much of defence as of revenge, which did not help to deliver Christ from the soldiers, but rather excited them the more against Him. But Peter, says S. Chrysostom, was hurried on by his eagerness to protect Christ, and did not think of this, but remembered rather His words, that Christ had ordered them to take two swords, inferring that it was for His defence. And accordingly he thought that in striking the servant he was acting according to the mind of Christ, "Let revenge cease, let patience be exhibited," says the *Interlinear Gloss*.

For all they that take the sword (without proper authority). To strike, *i.e.*, and wound others. To take the sword by public authority to punish the guilty, or in a just war, is lawful and honest.

Shall perish with the sword. Deserve thus to perish (Gen. ix. 6) (see Aug. *Quæst.* V. and N. T., *cap.* civ.). Homicides, moreover, and gladiators very often die violent deaths in war or by casualties (see *Act.* xxviii. 4).

And Christ here insinuates that the Jews would perish by the swords of the Romans. S. Luke adds that Christ said, "Suffer ye thus far." "Cease to draw your swords, ye have contended sufficiently," just as we part two combatants. But Cajetan explains otherwise, "Suffer the Jews to rage against Me, while their hour lasts, and the power of darkness." Hence Maldonatus and others infer that the other Apostles, when they saw S. Peter's zeal, wished to fight for Him also, but were forbidden by Christ. For, says S. Ambrose (in Luke xxii.), He who wished to save all by His own wounds, wished not to be saved by the wounding of His persecutors. Whence the motto, "Health by wounds," which is specially applicable to Christ, by whose stripes we are healed (1 Pet. ii. 24).

Verse 53- *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He will give Me more than twelve legions of angels?* A second reason for our Lord forbidding Peter to defend Him. I need not thy aid, since I have at My command all the armies of angels, one of whom slew the host of the Assyrians (2 Kings xix. 35). "If one angel," says S. Chrysostom, "slew so many thousands of armed men, what would twelve legions of them do against one thousand?" He accommodated His discourse to their wish, for they were already half dead with fear. "For Christ Himself as God needed not their aid," as Origen remarked; "they much rather needed His," to whom thousands of thousands ministered (see Dan. vii. 10).

Christ is within bounds in speaking as He does. For angels are countless, exceeding the number of all men, past, present and future (see S. *Dion. de Cel. Hier. S. Thom. part 1, quæst.* 2, *art.* 3).

to angels, men, and all living things, should be condemned by the whole Council as guilty of death for having, when asked and adjured by the High Priest, confessed that He was the Son of God?

He had restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and is therefore condemned to death by the envious priests. But they said in ignorance (but in another sense), that though Christ was in Himself most innocent and holy, yet He had taken on Himself to atone for our sins. And on that account He was guilty of death. For Christ took on Himself the sentence passed on Adam and his posterity, "In the day thou eatest thereof," &c. (Gen. ii. 17). For He wished to atone for our death, that by His death He might restore us to the eternal life of grace and glory. And accordingly He took on Himself this most undeserved sentence with the greatest calmness, equanimity, and patience, and surrendered Himself to God the Father as a victim for our sins (see Isa. liiii.), to teach us to bear contentedly (after His example, and for love of Him) the unjust judgments, the reproaches and censures of men, in order to make the best return to Him we can; while in His service we are treated as guilty of death, just as He was, by the whole Council, judged and proclaimed guilty of death for our sakes.

Tropologically: a Christian who sins condemns our Redeemer a second time to death, kills Him (as it were), and crucifies Him (see Heb. vi. 6). Whence S. Bridget (Rev. i. 37) tells us that the Blessed Virgin said to her, "I complain that my Son is crucified more cruelly by His enemies in the world now, than He was by the Jews. For the sins with which they spiritually crucify my Son are more abominable and grievous than the sins of those who crucified Him in the body." Some suppose that this Council was held early the next day, and that everything here recorded by S. Matthew from ver. 59 is spoken by anticipation, and ought to come after the first verse of the next chapter (see S. *Aug. de Cons. Evan.* iii. 7, &c.). Others maintain, more correctly, that these events were recorded by S. Matthew in due order, and that they took place immediately after midnight. For there were two Councils held, one at night, the one here mentioned, the second next morning (Luke xxii. 66). For as all the Council were not present at night, Caiaphas summoned a general assembly in the morning, to which he convened them all. In this Christ was condemned unanimously as guilty of treason, not only against Divine law in calling Himself the Son of God, but against human law also, in asserting that He was a King, and was given up to Pilate to sentence Him to crucifixion. The great Council (the Sanhedrin) was held in the morning.

Verse 67- *Then they spat on His face.* Great and brutal was the barbarity of the servants, as also of the Chief Priests and the Councillors who permitted it. But they considered they did rightly, in vindicating their law and the honour of God, since Christ had been already condemned to death as a blasphemer. Those who held Him, and the other bystanders as well, and

Verse 65- *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy.* The garments of the Jews could easily be rent, for they were open at the neck, so as to be readily taken on and off. They could therefore easily take hold of both sides of the opening, and tear them down to the waist (but no farther), in token of grief and indignation. This was usual among the heathen, but especially among the Jews, in grief or when they heard blasphemy against God. (See 2 Kings xix. 1.)

But Caiaphas, being High Priest, tore his garments unlawfully; for “he shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes,” Lev. xxi 10: the reasons for which I have there given. But Caiaphas rent his garment to arouse their ill-will against Jesus, and to expose Him as a blasphemer to general execration. But by this very act he signified symbolically that the old law with its priesthood was rent away by the death of Christ, and that he also was deprived of his Priesthood by Him. So S. Leo (*Serm. vi. de Pass.*) says, “He did this to increase their anger at what they had heard. But not knowing the meaning of his mad act, he deprived himself of the honour of the Priesthood in forgetfulness of the precept, ‘He shall not take off his head-dress, nor rend his clothes.’” And Origen says, “He rent his garments, displaying his filthiness and the nakedness of his soul, and showing forth in mystery that the old Priesthood was to be rent away, and its school of Priests, and its training, which was according to the letter.” And Jerome, “He rent his garments to show that the Jews had lost the glory of the Priesthood, and that the seats of the High Priests were empty.” So, too, S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius, Jansen, Barradius, and others.

He hath spoken blasphemy, in saying He was the Messiah and Son of God. The High Priest, for fear any one should be influenced by the words of Christ, anticipates it by fastening on Him the charge of blasphemy, to keep any one from speaking in His behalf, and to compel them all to condemn Him as a blasphemer.

Verse 65- *What need we any further witness?* Caiaphas here displays his wickedness, in not acting as a judge, but as a prosecutor and accuser of Christ. (See S. Chrysostom.)

Verse 66- *What think ye?* Here again he acts the part of a prosecutor and not of a judge, makes the very enemies of Christ His judges, and by his pontifical authority, and his sentence already decided on, drives them, as it were, to condemn Him as a malefactor. “The same persons,” says S. Chrysostom, “bring the charge, discuss it, and pass sentence.”

But they answered and said, He is guilty of death. Blasphemers were stoned (Lev. xxiv. 16), as S. Stephen was stoned. But they cried out that He was guilty, not of stoning, but of death. For they had already decided to crucify Him. Origen touchingly sets forth the indignity of this most iniquitous sentence. “How great an error was it to declare the Prince of Life Himself guilty of death, and not, on the testimony of so many who had risen, to look on Him as the Fount of Life, from whom life flowed forth on all living! For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” What greater indignity than that the Son of God, the source of all life

Christ here teaches us in every danger to invoke our guardian angels, as most wise, powerful, and full of love for us, as knowing that God orders this to be so. Conf Ps. xci. 11, xxxiv. 7; Gen. xxxii. 1, &c.

Verse 54- *But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus, it must be?* And if Scripture foretells My sufferings, “Why do ye oppose it?” says S. Chrysostom. This, then, is the third reason why Christ prohibits His defence by arms. “Though He might have these legions, He was unwilling to have them, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, that it was fitting He should thus suffer.” For we owe that reverence to the word of God, as not to oppose, but to assent to it and make it good. But thou wilt say, “The Jews then did no sin in killing Christ, because they merely fulfilled the Scriptures.” S. Athanasius (*de Cruce*) denies the inference. “For they did sin thus boldly against Christ, as fulfilling the words of prophecy, but merely of their own accord, so that the Prophet was not the cause of their acts, but their own free will. Or rather, they themselves caused the Prophets to predict such things of them.” The Jews then perpetrated this sacrilegious murder from their own wickedness and hatred of Christ, and the Prophets only foresaw and foretold it. They did not approve, or order the Jews to do it. But God ordered Christ to bear it all, and thus atone for the sins of men. “Pleasing the suffering, though the deed displeased.” Hence S. Leo (*Serm. 1. de Pass.*) says, “We have nothing to thank you for, O ye Jews; we owe nought to thee, O Judas. For your wickedness promoted our salvation without your will, and that was wrought by you which the hand and counsel of God decreed to be done. That death thus sets us free, but is a charge against you. Ye only justly lose that which ye wished all to lose.” See on Acts ii. 23. 4. The fourth reason is given by S. John (xviii. 11). “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? God ordained this cup of the Passion from all eternity, and now gives it Me to drink. Shall I not eagerly take it from His hand, and gladly drain it out?” Observe, He had before deprecated it as a very bitter cup of gall, but now, on knowing the Father’s will, He embraces it, as full of honeyed sweetness. For what is sweeter than for Him to obey God, to offer Himself as a holocaust to God, to make Himself a sacrifice to God for the salvation of men? “How sweetly,” says S. Bernard (*Serm. ii. in Pent.*), “didst Thou hold converse with men! How abundantly didst Thou bestow on them many and great blessings! How boldly didst Thou suffer such indignities and cruelties for men, so as to draw honey from the rock, and oil from the hardest stone!” (Deut. xxxii. 13). Which was hard set against Thy words, harder still at Thy wounds, most hard at the horrors of the Cross; for in all these sufferings He was as a lamb before His shearers, and opened not His mouth (Isa. liii. 7).

Verse 55- *In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple, and ye laid no hold on Me.* He had before reproved Peter and the Apostles when they drew their swords; He now

reproves still more severely Judas and the Jews who wished to take Him; exhibiting in this way wonderful loftiness, freedom, and calmness of mind. For He said this when He was still free. It was just after He had healed Malchus' ear. Shame on you, He would say, to come and seize Me by night, as a thief! I am no thief, but publicly taught the Jews in the Temple. Why did ye not seize Me then? I know why you seek to take Me, but I know also that ye were afraid to take Me in the Temple on account of the people. Deal with Me now as you please; I surrender Myself willingly; bind Me, scourge Me at your will, &c. *This is your hour, and the power of darkness.* And ye therefore fittingly come to seize Me by night, because I am the light of the world, and have openly taught the light of truth in the light of day. But ye as children of darkness shun the light and love darkness, and therefore do ye seize Me in the darkness. So say Bede and Theophylact, and S. Leo (*Serm. viii. de Pass.*), "The sons of darkness rushed against the true Light, and though using torches and lanterns, yet escaped not the darkness of unbelief, because they knew not the Author of light," &c.

It is clear from S. Luke that it was after these words that the Jews laid hands on Jesus. The order of events (see ver. 50) is here transposed by S. Matthew, who wished to bring together at one time all that related to the seizure of Christ without regard to the order of time.

Lastly, how cruel and insulting was this seizure of Christ! First, as being seized as a malefactor, though most innocent, and in Himself, as God, boundless and uncreated sanctity. Secondly, in being seized by the vilest of men, and His greatest enemies. Thirdly, in being forsaken by the Apostles. Fourthly, because by these His bonds He wished to loose the most grievous and hard bonds of our sins (see Lam. iv. 20). Fifthly, because He wished in this way to animate Christians and martyrs especially to bear boldly their imprisonment and bonds, as S. Paul did, Eph. iii. 1, and S. Chrysostom *in loc.* The bonds of many martyrs were cruel, but those of Christ were more cruel still.

This crowd consisted of a thousand soldiers, and also of many attendants and servants of the high priest. See John xviii. 12.

Verse 56- *But all this was done that the Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled.* These are the words of the Evangelist, not of Christ. All these indignities were foreordained in the eternal counsel of God, who willed that Christ should take them all on Himself, and suffer for the salvation of man. And He willed also that the Prophets should foretell them.

Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled. As He foretold (ver. 31), they fled because they saw no hope of assisting Him, and were afraid lest they themselves should be seized and evil entreated by the Jews. "They were more ready," says Bede (in Mark xiv. 49), "to take safety in flight, than to suffer boldly with Christ." For, as Origen says, "the Spirit was not yet given" (John vii. 39). Was this flight of the Apostles allowable? Some say there was little blame in it, because they inwardly and in their minds clave to Christ, though in outward act they fled, as being no longer able to help Him. They were therefore wise in flying, to avoid the risk of either denying Christ or of suffering

Him to death as a blasphemer; but if He said He were not, he would have replied, Why then didst Thou pass Thyself off with the people as Christ the Son of God? and would consequently have condemned Him as a false Prophet, in having made Himself equal with God, as the Jews urged against Him (John v. 19). For the whole ground of their hatred against Him was that He, a man, as it seemed, of low birth, said He was Christ and Son of God, preached accordingly without their sanction, despised their foolish traditions, and publicly and sharply reproved their vices and crimes.

Verse 64- *Jesus saith unto him, thou hast said.* Meaning thereby, I am. Christ candidly and clearly replied that He was Christ, both to show reverence to the Divine Name by which He was adjured, and to bestow due honour and obedience to the authority of the High Priest who adjured Him. Says S. Chrysostom, "to take away from them every excuse," that they might not be able to excuse themselves with men, nor before God in the day of judgment, by saying, We asked Jesus judicially in the Council, but He was either silent or answered ambiguously, wherefore we were not obliged to accept and believe in Him as Christ!

Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power. After this time, *i.e.*, in the day of judgment. Ye shall see Me then, who now seem to be only the Son of Man, to be truly the very Son of God, when I am seated at the right hand of God, and to be His equal in dignity, majesty, and glory. He alludes to Ps. cx. 1. I am He of whom David sang of old, "The Lord said unto my Lord," &c. Christ, moreover, not only as God, but as man too, sitteth on the right hand of God, as explained in Col. iii. 1.

The Chief Priests will not strictly and exactly see this in the day of judgment, as being reprobates, and not to be blessed with the sight of God, but to be cursed with the sight of the devil. But indirectly and in effect they will see it. For they will see such great majesty, glory, and splendour, and such a train of angels attending Him, that they will not doubt that He is near to God, nay, God himself, and the Son of God. For they will then experience His omnipotence in glorifying the godly and condemning the ungodly, who here have condemned Him as weak and feeble.

And coming in the clouds of Heaven. Alluding to Dan. vii 13. Behold here, and wonder at His greatness of mind, who though standing in the midst of His enemies, yet threatens them with His coming to judgment. As though He said, Ye now unjustly condemn Me as a false prophet and false Christ, but that day will come when I, who stand at your tribunal, shall be seated as judge. Ye condemn Me now to the death of the Cross; but I, in this very same place (for Christ will sit in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is nigh Jerusalem, Joel iii. 2), will condemn you to the eternal torture of hell-fire, because ye committed on My person this awful sacrilege, because ye were the murderers of Christ and of God. And surely it will thus be.

Verse 60- *But found none: yea, Though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.* “The wicked men found no semblance of blame in him,” says Origen, “though they were many, astute, and ingenious, so pure and blameless was the life of Jesus.” For the evidence of these witnesses was either false or contradictory, or not to the point, so that He could not be proceeded against as worthy of death.

At last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days. Christ, indeed, had said this (John ii. 19), in answer to their request for a sign that He was sent from God. But they were false witnesses, because, though they spake the truth in part, yet they perverted His words and meaning. For, first, He did not say “I am able to destroy,” but “destroy ye,” *i.e.*, “if ye destroy it.” Next, S. Mark says they added the words “made without hands,” though S. John has nothing of the kind. Next, Christ said not, “I will build it again,” but “I will raise it up.” In like manner they distorted its meaning, for He spake of the temple of His Body, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt as in a temple, as S. John added. For when the Jews asked for a sign, Christ gave them the sign of His resurrection. Christ might have plainly said, “I will rise again from the dead.” But He chose rather to make use of the figure of the temple, because in the presence of cavillers He was obliged to speak covertly and symbolically, and also by speaking thus obscurely to furnish occasion for His Passion; for He knew that the Jews, from misunderstanding this obscure saying, would prosecute Him as guilty of death. S. Mark here adds, “But neither so did their testimony agree together.” For however boastful these words of Christ seemed to be, yet they injured no one, and a capital charge could not be founded on them.

Verse 62- *And the High-Priest arose and said, Answerest Thou nothing to those things which they witness against Thee?* He arose, as being indignant that He was silent, and slighted this accusation as futile, and confuted it by His silence. Again, he rose up to show the heinousness and gravity of the crime brought against Christ, as though Christ, in speaking thus, had made light of the magnificence and holiness of the temple.

Verse 63- *But Jesus held His peace.* 1. Because the charge contained nothing worthy of death, and needed not an answer. 2. Because He knew that anything He might answer would be turned into a charge against Him. 3. Because He was fully preparing Himself for the death decreed for Him of the Father, and wished not to escape it by self-excuse. 4. The silence of Christ atoned for Adam’s excuses (*Com. on Mark xiv. apud S. Jer.*). Christ was silent, in order by His silence to make satisfaction for Adam’s foolish talking.

And the High Priest said to Him, I adjure Thee by the Living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. I, the High Priest, am the Vicar of God on earth, and therefore by the authority of God committed to me, I call God to witness, and conjure Thee to answer. Caiaphas here touches the essence of the whole matter. Jesus said that He was the Christ, sent with supreme power for the salvation of men. The Chief Priests pertinaciously denied it. He therefore asks the question not for information, but in order to condemn Him. For if He said He were, they condemned

hardship. But when they had received at Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit, they boldly exposed themselves to every trial. This flight of theirs was defective, as arising from fear and failing in resolution, but not unlawful and wicked.

But others regard it as unlawful, as springing from distrust in Christ, and despairing of His aid, by which act they tacitly denied Christ. The first opinion I said (ver. 31) was the most probable. They sinned therefore venially, as struck down by sudden and excessive fear, and without His command or assent. For having experienced so often Christ’s aid in danger, they ought to have still trusted in it, especially after His recent displays of power. They ought to have sought for His aid, and to have prayed, Lord, help us! what wouldst Thou have us to do? And Christ no doubt would have told them. S. Mark here speaks of the young man who left his linen cloak and fled away naked. Who he was, and why he did so, we shall read in S. Mark.

Verse 57- *But they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled.* S. John mentions that they led Him first to Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas. This was out of respect to Annas as the elder, or because he especially wished that Christ should be taken. Whence S. Cyril and F. Lucas think that the price of Judas’ betrayal was paid him there, or because the house of Annas was on the road (see on S. John xviii. 13). For it was in the house of Caiaphas that Christ was first examined, smitten, and denied by S. Peter, as is clear from S. Matthew, S. Mark, and S. Luke; and S. John (xviii. 19) also insinuates the same when he says “that the High Priest questioned Jesus.” For when he says (ver. 24) that Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, it must be considered an analepsis. For John merely goes back to what he had omitted, for fear any one should conclude from his previous statement that Christ had been examined by Annas and not by Caiaphas. Some transpose ver. 24 and put it in after ver. 13, as S. Cyril does. So Origen, S. Augustine (*de Cons. Evang. cap. vi.*), Jansen, &c.

Were assembled. He says not “were called together,” for this had been done when Judas requested Caiaphas’ soldiers to take Christ. For it was then that Caiaphas summoned the Scribes and Elders to judge and condemn Him as soon as Judas brought Him before them. For they had conceived a deadly hatred against Christ, and thirsted for His death. “They sat watching all the night in Caiaphas’ house,” says S. Chrysostom.

Verse 58- *But Peter followed Him afar off.* Peter alone gathered courage, and partly from curiosity, but more from love of Jesus, followed Him; but yet it was “afar off,” for fear he should be seized by the soldiers, both as a disciple of Jesus, and also as having cut off Malchus’ ear. His flight was a token of fear, his return a token of love overmastering his fear. “Peter,” says S. Ambrose in Luke xxii., “is deserving our highest admiration for not

forsaking the Lord even when afraid; his fear was natural, his care for Him was from affection; his fear alien to his nature, his not flying natural; his following Him was from devotion, his denial from surprise." In Peter, therefore, fear and love struggled together; in the first case love overcame fear, but soon afterwards under heavy temptation fear overcame love, when through fear of the attendants he denied Christ.

Unto the High Priest's house. That is, Caiaphas.' This is more fully stated John xviii. 15. The disciple there mentioned was S. John, according to S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius. So Jerome (in *Epit. Marc.*), and Lyranus, who says that John was known to the High Priest from selling him fishes, or because one of his kindred was a servant of the High Priest, or because he had sold his inheritance to the High Priest (*Niceph. i.* 28). But it is more likely that it was not one of the Apostles, because they were not known to the High Priest. And, moreover, both Christ and his Apostles were hated by the High Priest, and would not have been admitted into his palace by the servants; more likely would have been taken prisoners. Most probably it was one of His secret disciples, according to the Syriac version.

And went in, and sat with the servants. Not into the house where Jesus was to be examined, but into the court. "He approached not the place where Jesus was," says S. Jerome, "lest he should be suspected, but sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire," as the other Evangelists state. Peter erred from imprudence and rashness, for thrusting himself among the servants, and thus exposing himself to the risk of either joining with them in reviling Him, or else of suffering imprisonment and scourging. He therefore shortly afterwards denied Christ. "He that loveth danger shall perish therein" (Ecclus. iii. 26).

To see the end. Whether Christ would be condemned or not, or set Himself free from His peril. If condemned, Peter would have taken refuge in flight; if acquitted, he would have dutifully returned to Him.

Verse 59- *But the Chief Priests and all the Council sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death.* Here comes in S. John's narrative (xviii. 19).

The High Priest "asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine," as is there said, because, says Euthymius, "he wished to convict Him of introducing strange doctrines, and of stirring up sedition." For it was the duty of the High Priest to inquire, into heresies and new sects. But Jesus firmly and prudently replied that He had taught openly, and that those who heard His teaching were there present, and though His enemies, could speak to it. Let him ask them what He had taught them. For there is no surer evidence of innocence and sound teaching than that which comes from unfriendly hearers. For had Christ stated His own doctrine, they might have urged that through fear of condemnation He had said one thing in the Council and another in public. "He replied not arrogantly," says S. Chrysostom, "but as confident in the truth." Whence He says, "Why askest thou Me?" Why dost thou insidiously and captiously ask Me, thou crafty High Priest, to catch something out of My mouth wherewith to accuse and condemn Me? Thou canst easily learn from the common

opinion of the people what I taught them. If thou knowest it not, thou hast not done thy duty as High Priest. And if thou wishest to know it now, ask the bystanders, My enemies, who have often heard Me. Let them produce, if they can, a single untrue or unsound word of Mine. For I know they cannot do so in truth.

But when S. John says "that one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand," S. Cyril thinks that he was struck with His teaching, and wished to remove this impression by striking Him.

He struck Him on the cheek, as vindicating the honour of the High Priest. Such a blow, inflicted with a mailed hand, was both severe and disgraceful, as appears from the "sacred countenance" which is religiously preserved at S. Peter's, and exhibited to the people in Passion Week. "What more audacious act?" says & Chrysostom. "Let the Heaven be horrified, let the earth tremble at the patience of Christ and the insolence of His servants." "Methinks," says S. Cyril, "the whole universe would have shuddered had it known what it meant: for the Lord of Glory was smitten by the impious hand of a man." It is a marvel that this hand was not at once shrivelled up, nay, that the earth had not swallowed the man up alive. But the gentleness and love of Christ prevented this, who called him and many of his fellows to repentance (Acts ii. 37). Just as Jeremiah foretold in sorrow, or rather in astonishment, "He will give His cheek to him that smiteth Him. He will be filled full of reproach" (Lam. iii. 30).

Now comes in S. Matthew's narrative. Finding they could find nothing against Him from those who were there, "they sought false witnesses," as despairing of finding true testimony, because Christ's wisdom, truthfulness, and sanctity were fully known to all the people.

That they might deliver Him to death. This was the great end for which they sought for false witnesses as a necessary means, though the sole end of justice is to condemn only on true evidence, and to inflict on false witnesses a correspondent punishment. For they wished for their own credit not to appear men of violence, but impartial judges, and consequently to be proceeding judicially against Him, though they were at the same time both judges and accusers, against every rule of justice and equity. "They craftily devise," says S. Chrysostom, "the outward form and appearance of justice, disguising their craft under the veil of a trial" (*Vict. Ant. on Markxiv.*). Again, they wished Him to be condemned by Pilate, but they knew he would not condemn Him unless the crime were proved by witnesses to be deserving of death. The Chief Priests therefore seek false witnesses against Jesus, the Author of life and Saviour of the world, because, though they knew it not, God had decreed to give us, by His death, life both here and hereafter.