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CHAPTER 27: 21-34

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 Lapse'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. Lapse'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 27: 21-34

Verse 21- *But the Governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.* That is, after he had given them time for consideration, he again asked them, and demanded an answer.

Bede (on Mark xv. 9) strikingly remarks, "The demand they made still cleaves to them. For as they preferred a robber to Jesus, a murderer to the Saviour, the destroyer to the Giver of Life, they deservedly lost both their property and their life. They were reduced, indeed, so low by violence and sedition as to forfeit the independence of their country, which they had preferred to Christ, and cared not to recover the liberty of body and soul which they had bartered away."

Allegorically: "Their choice of Barabbas foreshadowed," says S. Jerome, "that robber Antichrist, whom they would hereafter choose in the end of the world." And S. Ambrose (in Luke xxii.), "Barabbas means the son of a father. They, therefore, to

mountain. For Mount Moriah and Calvary are close together, and they look like one mountain parted into two ridges or hills.

The Apostle (Heb. xiii. xi *seq.*) gives four reasons for Christ being crucified outside Jerusalem, and thence concludes, "Let us go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." It was chiefly to signify that the virtues of His Cross were to be transferred from the Jews to all nations, that "the Cross of Christ might be the altar, not of the temple, but of the world" (S. Leo, *Serm. ix. de Pass.*).

Verse 34- *And they gave Him wine (Arab. and A. V., vinegar) to drink mingled with gall.* This was while the Cross was being made ready, and Christ was resting for a while. Wine used to be given to condemned criminals to quench their thirst, and to strengthen them also to endure their sufferings, as it is said (Prov. xxxi. 6), "Give strong drink unto those that are ready to perish, and wine to those in bitterness of heart." But the Jews, with untold barbarity, made this wine bitter with gall, partly to insult and partly to give Him pain. Whence Christ complains, "They gave Me gall to eat" (Tertullian, *Lib. x. contra Judæos*, reads "to drink"); for the gall was Christ's food, the wine His drink. Euthymius thinks that bits of dried gall were steeped in vinegar, so that the vinegar was in the place of wine, and the bits of gall instead of the morsel of bread which is thrown into the wine, that those who are faint might drink first and eat afterwards.

This was different from the draught given to Christ on the Cross, this being of wine, the latter of vinegar. The Greek writers here mention "vinegar," but it was probably only a sour kind of wine. On the first occasion Christ says, "They gave Me gall to eat;" on the second, "They gave Me vinegar to drink." S. Mark terms it "wine mingled with myrrh," myrrh and gall having been mixed together, or because the myrrh, from being bitter, was called gall. So say all the Fathers and commentators, except Baronius, who considered that the wine was flavoured with myrrh and other spices. But the Jews would not have allowed this to be given to Christ. Baronius seems afterwards (*vol. x. ad fin.*) to have changed his opinion.

And when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.

Either as offended at the Jews for offering so nauseous a draught, or as wishing to suffer greater thirst on the Cross, and thus set us an example of self-mortification. Palamon is said to have refused to taste some wild herbs which his disciple Pachomius had, for his Easter repast, flavoured with oil, saying, "My Lord had vinegar to drink, and shall I taste oil?"

whom it was said, 'Ye are of your father the devil,' are set forth as those who would afterwards prefer Antichrist, the son of his father, to the true Son of God."

Verse 22- *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified.* "Pilate," says S. Chrysostom, "places the matter in their hands, that all might be ascribed to their clemency, thus to charm and soften them down by his obsequiousness. But all in vain. For the Chief Priests had already resolved to insist on His crucifixion, as being not only the most cruel, but also the most ignominious of deaths, the death of robbers and other evil-doers. For they hoped in this way to destroy all His former credit and reputation." So says S. Chrysostom, "Fearing that His memory should be kept in mind, they chose this disgraceful death, not knowing that the truth when hindered is more fully manifested."

Verse 23- *The Governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more (vehemently, πεζισσῶς), saying, Let Him be crucified.* The more Pilate insisted on His innocence, the more did they clamour for His crucifixion, "not laying aside their anger, hatred, and blasphemy, but even adding to them" (Origen). They thus fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah (xii. 11), "Mine heritage (the synagogue) is made unto Me as a lion in the forest; they have uttered their voice against Me;" and David's (Ps. xxii. 13), "They opened their mouth upon Me, as a ravening and a roaring lion;" and Isaiah's (v. 7), "I looked for judgment, and behold iniquity; and for righteousness, and behold a cry." (So S. Jerome.)

Verse 24- *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude. ἀπενίψατο, washed away.* "He adopted," says Origen, "the Jewish custom, and wished to calm them down, not by words only, but also by deed." He washed his hands, but not his conscience. But this took place after the scourging and crowning, of Christ. (See S. John.) Here is a transposition.

Saying, I am innocent. I condemn Him against my will. Ye are the offenders. Ye are guilty of His death. How foolish was this timid, heartless, and slothful Governor in speaking thus! Why opposeth thou not the injustice of the people? "Seek not to be judge, if thou canst not by thy power break through iniquities" (Eccles. vii. 6). At another time thou didst let loose the soldiers an the riotous mob (Joseph. *B. J.*, xviii. 4). Why dost thou not act thus firmly now? If thou canst not, through the fury of the Jews, set Him free now, at least delay thy sentence till their fury subsides.

S. Chrysostom (in Luke xxiii. 22) says, "Though he washed his hands, and said he was innocent, yet his permitting it was a sign of weakness and cowardice. For he ought never to have yielded Him up, but rather rescued

Him, as the Centurion S. Paul” (Acts xxi. 33). S. Augustine more forcibly (*Serm. cxviii. de Temp.*) “Though Pilate washed his hands, yet he washed not away his guilt; for though he thought he was washing away the Blood of that Just One from his limbs, yet was his mind still stained with it. It was he, in fact, who slew Christ by giving Him up to be slain. For a firm and good judge should not condemn innocent blood, either through fear or the risk of being unpopular.” And S. Leo (*Serm. viii. de Pass.*) said, “Pilate did not escape guilt, for by siding with the turbulent mob he became partner of others’ guilt.”

Verse 25- *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.* Let the guilt thou fearest be transferred from thee to us. If there be any guilt, may we and our posterity atone for it. But we do not acknowledge any guilt, and consequently, as not fearing any punishment, we boldly call it down on ourselves. And thus have they subjected not only themselves, but their very latest descendants, to God’s displeasure. They feel it indeed even to this day in its full force, in being scattered over all the world, without a city, or temple, or sacrifice, or priest, or prince, and being a subject race in all countries. It was, too, in punishment for Christ’s crucifixion that Titus ordered five hundred Jews to be crucified every day at the siege of Jerusalem, as they crowded out of the city in search of food, “so that at last there was no room for the crosses, and no crosses for the bodies” (Joseph. *B. J. vi. 12*). “This curse,” says Jerome, “rests on them even to this day, and the blood of the Lord is not taken away from them,” as Daniel foretold (ix. 27).

Strange stories are told by Cardinal Hugo of special diseases which attacked the Jews, in periodical loss of blood, etc., though Salmeron and Abulensis [Tostatus] attribute them to natural causes.

Verse 26- *Then (when the Jews had taken on themselves the guilt of Christ’s death) released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.* S. Matthew, as usual, slightly touches on the scourging; S. Mark and S. Luke speak of it more fully, and reckon this as Pilate’s fifth appeal to the compassion of the Jews, to induce them to ask for His life.

Observe—1. Scourging among the Romans was the punishment of slaves. (See *Ff de Pænis* 1. “*Servorum*,” and the *Lex Sempronia*.) S. Paul, as a Roman citizen, protested against being scourged (Acts xvi.). Martyrs were scourged by way of disgrace, of which many instances are given. 2. Free persons also were scourged after they had been condemned to death, as though they had thus become slaves. Hence the fasces had rods for scourging, and the axe for executions. 3. This scourging of Christ was before His condemnation, and He was thus spared the usual scourging afterwards. For one scourging only is spoken of in the Gospels. 4. S. Jerome (*Epitaph. Paulæ*), S. Paulinus (*Ep. xxxiv.*), Prudentius, and others (see Gretser, *de Cruce, Lib. i.*), say that Christ was fastened to a column to be scourged, and that this column was afterwards placed in the Church of S. Praxedes at Rome. But the column which is there is very small, and is consequently supposed to be only a part of the large column mentioned by S. Jerome. Bosius maintains that it is the whole of the column, and that S. Jerome is speaking of the column at which Christ was first scourged. S. Chrysostom

fire of His wrath. One of these women, Berenice or Veronica, offered Christ a napkin to wipe His face, and received it back from Him with His features marked on it (see Marianus, Scotus, Baronius, and others). The napkin is said to be preserved at Rome.

Verse 33- *And they came unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.* “Calvary” is the bare skull of a man; Golgotha means the same; so called from its roundness; from the root “gal” or “gabal,” to roll about. Some suppose that S. Matthew wrote in Greek and himself explained the Hebrew; others that the explanation was given by the Greek translator of the original Hebrew.

But why was the place so called? Some say because Adam was there buried, and redeemed, too, by Christ on the same spot by the Blood of the Cross, and restored to the life of grace. See note on Eph. v. 14, and the Fathers there quoted. For there was a tradition that Noah took the bones of Adam into the ark, and after the deluge gave the skull, and Judæa with it, to Shem, his favourite son. Such respect did the ancients pay to their dead from believing in the immortality of the soul. “Christ,” says S. Ambrose (in Luke xxiii.), “was crucified in Golgotha because it was fitting that the first-fruits of our life should rest in the very spot from which our death had come.” Others give a more literal and obvious reason, that it was because criminals were there beheaded. Baronius and others reject this view, on the ground that beheading was not a Jewish practice. But it is certain that after the Roman conquest criminals were beheaded, as John the Baptist by Herod Antipas and S. James by Herod Agrippa. Besides this, there were lying about on that spot the skulls of those who had died in various other ways.

Mystically: Gretser says, “It was prophetically called Golgotha, because Christ our Lord, our true Head, there died.”

It was Christ’s own will to be crucified in a dishonourable place like this, in order to expiate our infamous and execrable sins. He thus converted it into one of honour and adoration, for Christians in Calvary reverence and adore Christ crucified. For Christ, as Sedulius says,—

“With glory all our sufferings hath arrayed,
And sanctified the torments He endured.”

So, too, Seneca (*Cons. ad Helvidiam*) says that Socrates entered the prison to take away the ignominy from the place.

Bede (*de Locis Sanctis, cap. ii.*) observes, from S. Jerome and S. Augustine (*Serm. lxxi. de temp.*), that Abraham offered up his son on this very

Him they compelled. See above, chap. v. 41. It was a great injury and insult which they put on Simon as a stranger. But he bore it all with patience, and therefore was enlightened by Christ, and became, as I have said, a Christian. He was a sharer in His Cross first, and afterwards a partaker of His joy.

Symbolically: S. Gregory (*Mor.* viii. 44), "To bear the Cross by compulsion is to submit to affliction and abstinence from some other motive than the proper one. Does not He bear the Cross by compulsion who subdues his flesh, as if at Christ's command, but yet loves not the spiritual country? So, too, Simon bears the Cross, and yet dies not under it, since every hypocrite chastens, indeed, his body by abstinence, and yet through love of glory lives to the world."

To bear the cross. Christ at first bare His own Cross, fifteen feet high (as is said) and eight feet across. And that, too, when covered all over with blood, wearied, and broken down. He supported one end on His shoulder, and dragged the other along the ground. He thus constantly struck against the stones, and so reopened His wounds, causing continual pain. S. John says, "He went forth bearing His cross" (xix. 17), as was customary with criminals (see Lipsius and Gretser). But when the soldiers saw that He was sinking under it, they placed it on Simon, to keep Jesus alive, and reserve Him for greater sufferings. They wished, too, to get quickly over their work, and then go home to their meal, for it was now mid-day.

It does not appear that Simon carried the Cross with Jesus in front and himself behind, but that he bare it alone. (See Luke xxiii. 26.) The Fathers here discern various mysteries.

[Pseudo-]Athanasius, "The Lord both bear His own Cross, and again Simon bare it also. He bare it first as a trophy against the devil, and of His own will, for He went without any compulsion to His death. But afterwards the man Simon bare it, to make it known to all that the Lord died not as His own due, but as that of all mankind." S. Ambrose (in Luke xxiii.), "He first lifted up the trophy of His Cross, and afterwards handed it to His martyrs to do the like. For it was meet that He should first lift up His own trophy as victor, and that afterwards Christ should bear it in man, and man in Christ."

Origen, "It was not only meet that He should take up His Cross Himself, but that we also should bear it, and thus perform a compulsory but salutary service" (see Matt. x. 38). It was the heresy of Basilides and Marcion, that Christ, having dazzled the eyes of the Jews, disappeared from their sight and left Simon behind, who was crucified in His stead. This, too, is the error of the Mahometans.

Here comes in, from Luke xxiii. 31, our Lord's meeting the women on His way to Calvary, and telling them not to weep for Him; "for if they do these things in the green tree," &c. For He Himself was a green tree, ever flourishing with the branches and fruits of grace, and thus unsuited for the fire of God's vengeance. But the Jews were a dry tree, void of grace and barren of good works, and thus most fitted for the

considered that there were two scourgings. But most probably it was only part of the column S. Jerome mentions, or one of those to which He was bound in the house of Caiaphas, and the larger one that at which He was scourged in the house of the Governor.

But in what respects was this scourging so cruel and savage?

1. Christ being bound to this short column, and standing with the whole height of His body above it, was quite at the mercy of those who scourged Him. Again, the mere exposure of His most pure and virgin body to these filthy mockers was a sore affliction to Him. But He was twice, or as some say thrice, stripped; first, at His scourging; secondly, when crowned with thorns. This stripping was attended with the greatest pain; for as His garment stuck to His wounds, they were forcibly reopened as it was torn away.

The forty martyrs were animated by this example, when they boldly stripped themselves and plunged into the freezing water. (See S. Basil's *Homily.*)

2. Pilate wished to excite the compassion of the Jews by saying, "Behold the man." Behold Him who has no longer the appearance of a man, but of some slaughtered animal, so besmeared was He with blood and marred in His form.

3. The soldiers had of their own wanton cruelty crowned Him with thorns, and perhaps had been bribed by the Jews to scourge Him with greater severity. The blessed Magdalene of Pazzi, a nun of Florence, saw in a trance Christ scourged by thirty pairs of men, one after the other. Some say that He had 5000 blows inflicted on Him. S. Bridget is said to have had the exact number (5475) revealed to her. From such a scourging as this He would have died naturally again and again, had not His Godhead specially sustained Him.

4. His bodily frame was most delicate, and acutely sensitive to pain, as fashioned by the Holy Spirit, and He consequently felt the scourging more severely than we should have done.

5. The prophets, and also Christ Himself, foretold that this scourging would be most heavy and severe. See S. Matt. xx. 19, and Job xvi. 14, "He brake Me with wound upon wound." They added, *i.e.*, blows to blows, wounds to wounds, so that the whole body seemed one continuous wound. Conf. Ps. lxxiii. 14, "All the day long have I been scourged;" and Ps. cxxix. 3, "The sinners wrought upon my back as smiths on an anvil;" but the Hebrew [and A.V.], "The ploughers ploughed upon My back," they made furrows on My back with scourges. So, too, Aquila and Theodot. This is also indicated by

Jacob's words (Gen. xlix. 11), "He shall wash His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of the grape," meaning by His garments and clothes His flesh, and by the wine His blood.

6. Christ was scourged, as slaves were, with small ropes or thongs. Some suppose that He was scourged: 1. with rods of thorns; 2. with cords and iron goads; 3. with chains made of hooks. Antonius Gallus (*de Cruciatu Martyrum*) describes the various kinds of scourges which were used.

S. Bridget says that the Blessed Virgin was present at the scourging, and that her pain and sorrow added wondrously to His. She describes also the mode and the barbarity of His scourging (S. Bridget, Rev. i. 10).

Now Christ wished in this way to atone for our evil lusts and manifold sins. And in doing this (says S. Thom., par. iii. sec. 46, art. 6, ad. 6), He considered not only the great virtue of His sufferings from the union of His Godhead with His human nature, but also how much it would avail even in that nature for making satisfaction. Moreover, He wished to obtain power and strength for all martyrs, in order to their enduring every kind of scourging. Conf. Isa. liii. 5. In all this Christ manifested most marvellous patience. He uttered not a groan, gave no indication of pain, stood firm as a rock. Nay, He lorded it over all sufferings, as being above them. Such a temper obtained heathen admiration. S. Cyprian (*de Bono Patient. cap. iii.*), among the proofs of His Divine Majesty, speaks of "His continuous endurance, in which He exhibited the patience of His Father." Tertullian, too (*de Pat. cap. iii.*), "He who had proposed to hide Himself in man's form, exhibited nought of man's impatience. And in this ye Pharisees ought to have specially recognised the Lord." S. Ambrose, too (*Serm. xvii. in Ps. cxviii.*) [cxix.], speaks of His "triumphant silence under calumny." The Jews ought to have gathered from this the conclusion of the Centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." All this was caused by His love of God and man. Love triumphed over pain, and made His pains as nothing. And hence He was willing to suffer in all points, and in all His members and senses. S. Thomas (par. iii. qu. 46, art. 5) thus writes, "He suffered in the desertion of His friends, in His credit, in His honour, in the spoiling of His goods, in His soul by sorrow, in His body by His wounds. He suffered too in all parts of His body, and in every sense." But His sufferings of mind were by far the greatest. For He was specially wounded by the sins of each single man. He grieved also for the multitude of the lost. He had sympathy for the martyrs and others who had to endure sufferings. But His boundless love urged Him on to endure all this. For love is the measure of pain, and we cannot live in love without pain. Hence it is said of Christ, "Sculptured, thou seest His love in every limb."

Verse 26 (Continued)- *Delivered Him to be crucified.* After His scourging and crowning with thorns, which comes next, as I have said (ver. 24). This is therefore a transposition. S. Matthew here relates many things briefly, which S. John (xix. 1-16) records more fully. Pilate then delivered Jesus to the Jews, after he had condemned Him. Adrichomius (p. 163) gives Pilate's supposed sentence, which states that the charges had been proved; making these charges, which he knew to be false, a cloak

vehement demand that He should be crucified, as making Himself the Son of God. Pilate on hearing this was startled, and asked Him who He was, as if He might have been the son of some heathen god who might avenge His death. When He gave no answer, Pilate added that He had power to put Him to death, which brought out our Lord's reply, that he had no power over Him, "unless it were given him from above." For Pilate, notwithstanding his paramount authority over other Jews, had but a permissive authority over Christ, who, as the Son of God, was not subject to any human power. Pilate then, in judging and condemning Christ, sinned in a threefold way: by usurping an authority over Him which He really had not; by yielding to the clamour of the Jews, and by condemning an innocent man.

Verse 31- *And after that they had mocked Him they took the robe off from Him.* "After they had fully satiated themselves with their insults," Victor of Antioch on Mark xv. "But they left on Him (says Origen) the crown of thorns." "He is stripped," says [Pseudo-]Athanasius, "by His executioners of the coats of skins which we had put on in Adam, that for these we might put on Christ."

And put His own raiment on Him. That they who crucified Him might claim it as their own, and also that He might thus be recognised and be insulted the more.

And led Him away to crucify Him. Preceded, it would seem, by a trumpeter, who summoned the people to the execution (Gretser, *de Cruce*, 1. 16). Now Christ was worn out by having been constantly on foot both through the night and on the morning. (Adrichomius calculated the exact distances.) Accordingly,

Verse 32- *As they came out* (either from Pilate's house, so S. Jerome—or from the city, so Fr. Lucas and others) *they found a man of Cyrene.* Either Cyrene in Libya, or in Syria, or in Cyprus, from whence he came to Judæa. He was a Gentile (S. Hilary, S. Ambrose, S. Leo, Bede, and others), though Maldonatus and Fr. Lucas consider he was a Jew, having probably become a proselyte on coming to Judea. This signified that the Gentiles would believe in Christ, and that the Jews would be eventually converted by their means.

Simon by name. Pererius mentions the tradition that he and his afterwards became Christians. S. Mark adds that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who, it seems, were well known in his day as Christians. (Rufus was first Bishop of Thebes and afterwards of Tortosa. He is mentioned by Polycarp (*ad Philipp. chap. ix.*). Alexander was martyred at Carthage, March 11.) Some suppose Simon or Niger (Acts xiii. 1) to be the same person.

the Jews. Being made by the Father a little lower than the angels, He was afterwards crowned with glory and honour." "Christ," says S. Jerome, "was crowned with thorns that He might win for us a royal diadem."

Verse 29 (Continued)- *And a reed in His right hand.* This, which represented His sceptre as King of the Jews, was a fragile, worthless, mean, and ridiculous thing. It is described as a smooth cane with a woolly top, &c.

Symbolically: S. Jerome and [Pseudo-]Athanasius say, as the reed drives away and kills serpents, so does Christ venomous lusts. Hear S. Jerome: "As Caiaphas knew not what He said (John xi. 50 seq.), so they too, though acting with another intent, yet furnished us believers with mysteries (*sacramenta*). In the scarlet robe He bears on Him the blood-stained deeds of the Gentiles; in the crown of thorns He does away with the ancient curse; with the reed He destroys poisonous animals, or (in another sense) He holds in His hand the reed to record the sacrilege of the Jews." S. Ambrose too (in Luke xxii.) says, "The reed is held in Christ's hand that human weakness should no more be moved as a reed with the wind, but be strengthened and made firm by the works of Christ; or, as S. Mark says, it strikes His head that our nature, strengthened by contact with His Godhead, should waver no more." This reed and other relics of the Passion are said to have been carefully preserved (Bede, *de Con. Sanctis*, cap. xx.; and Greg. Turon. *de Gloria Martyrum*, cap. vii.)

Verse 29 (Continued)- *And they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!*

Notice here all that was done in jest. Bringing together the whole band as an attendant army. His throne a stone or seat, raised up like a tribunal. His crown was of thorns, His robe a scarlet chlamys, His sceptre a reed; in the place of the people's applause were the mockings of the soldiers; there were the spittings, the blows, and the stripes. All these did Christ bear with divine humility and patience, and thus deserved "that at the name," &c. (Phil. ii. 10).

Tropologically: Christ here wished to set forth the vain estate and the sufferings of all kings and rulers; to turn all insults into weapons of victory, and specially to overcome the pride of Satan by His humility; to teach that worldly kingdoms consisted in pomp and display, His in contempt of honour, pleasures, and self. See Theophylact, Jansenius [Gaudno], Pseudo-Athanasius, and Tertullian, *ut supra*.

It is to be noted that Agrippa was shortly afterwards insulted at Alexandria exactly in the same way. See Philo, *in Flaccum*.

Verse 30- *And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.* As having foolishly aspired to be King of Judæa; to drive also the crown of thorns more firmly into His head. These grossest insults and most cruel pains were devised by devils rather than men, says Origen. "Not one member only, but the whole body suffered these atrocious injuries," &c., says S. Chrysostom. Here comes in John xix. 1-16. Pilate's presenting Christ to the people to excite their compassion; their

for his own sloth and injustice; the Chief Priests gave no proof, but merely made false and calumnious assertions.

Pilate in his rescript to Tiberius says that he had condemned Jesus through the importunity of the Jews, though He was in other respects a holy and divine man. Orosius (*Hist.* vii. 4) speaks of his testimony to Christ's virtues; and Eusebius (in *Chron. ad an.* 38), that he spoke in favour of Christians to Tiberius, who proposed that Christianity should be recognised among other religions. (Conf. Tert. *Apol.* cap. 5 and 21; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 2, and others.)

Christ, then, was on Pilate's own testimony most unjustly condemned by him; for envy accused, hatred witnessed against Him; His crime was innocence; fear perverted judgment, ambition condemned, cruelty punished.

Verse 27- *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall.* "Then" refers not to the preceding words, "delivered Him to be crucified," but to the scourging. The soldiers scourged Jesus, and crowned Him at the same time with thorns.

Gathered unto Him the whole band, to adorn Him, by way of insult, with the royal insignia, as pretending to be King of the Jews. "For soldiers are a cruel race," says S. Chrysostom, "and take pleasure in insulting." It was the Prætorian Band, quartered in the castle of Antonia.

Verse 28- *And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe.* "Making jest of Him," says Origen. This stripping can be referred either to His scourging or to His crowning with thorns. It is consequently uncertain whether He resumed His garments after He had been scourged, and was stripped of them again and arrayed in the scarlet robe, or whether the scarlet robe was put upon His naked body immediately after His scourging.

Symbolically: "In the scarlet robe," says S. Jerome, "the Lord bears the blood-stained works of the Gentiles." "He bare," says S. Athanasius, "in the scarlet garment a resemblance to the blood wherewith the earth had been polluted." And Origen, "The Lord, by taking on Him the scarlet robe, took on Himself the blood, that is, the sins of the world, which are bloody and red as scarlet; for the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Anagogically: S. Gregory, "For what is purple save blood, and the endurance of sufferings, manifested for love of the Kingdom?" And again, "The Lord made His empurpled ascent in a triumphal litter, because we attain to the Kingdom that is within through tribulation and blood."

S. Mark and S. John call this a purple garment (not scarlet). S. Ambrose says they were two different garments, and that He was arrayed in both.

Gretser (*Lib. 1, de Cruce*) gives authorities for there being only one garment, called indifferently purple or scarlet. Perhaps the garment had been twice dyed,—with the murex and the coccus; and garments thus dyed are of a more lasting colour. Now this was a kingly dress, and thus did they make Christ a King in mockery. This robe or chlamys was shorter and tighter than the pallium, and soldiers wore it over their armour. The one then used seems to have been the worn-out dress of some Roman soldier, but being purple, was of the imperial colour.

Symbolically: S. Cyril (in John xii. 15) says, “By the purple garment is signified the sovereignty over the whole world, which Christ was about to receive.” So, too, Origen, S. Augustine, and others. But this He obtained for Himself by fighting and shedding His blood. African and other soldiers anciently wore red garments. See, too, Nahum ii. 3.

Verse 29- *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head.* This was done both for insult and for torture. It was done, too, by Jewish insolence, and not by Pilate’s order, though he permitted it (see above on ver. 25). These thorns were those of the sea-rush or of the blackthorn; perhaps the two sorts were twisted together. S. Helena brought two of them to Rome and placed them in the Church of Santa Croce. S. Bridget (Rev. 1. 10) says that the crown was placed a second time on His head when on the Cross; that it came down to the middle of His forehead, and that such streams of blood flowed from the wounds as to run down to His eyes and ears, and even to His beard; that He seemed one mass of blood. He could not indeed see His Mother till the blood had been squeezed out of His eyelids. All pictures represent Him as crucified with the crown of thorns, as Origen and Tertullian distinctly assert He was. The torture of all this was very great, for the thorns were very sharp, and also driven into the head and brain. The literal object of this was to insult and torture Christ for pretending to be King of the Jews.

But Origen gives its mystical meaning, “In this crown the Lord took on Himself the thorns of our sins woven together on His head.” For S. Hilary says “the sting of sin is in the thorns of which Christ’s victorious crown is woven.” “Let me ask you,” says Tertullian (*de Con. Milit. ad fin.*), “what crown did Jesus wear for both sexes? Of thorns, methinks, and briars, as a figure of those sins which the earth of our flesh hath brought forth unto us, but which the virtue of the Cross hath taken away, crushing, (as it did) all the stings of death by the sufferings of the head of the Lord. For besides the figurative meaning there is assuredly the contumely, disgrace, and dishonour, and, blended with them, the cruelty, which thus both defiled and wounded His brows.”

Tropologically: The thorns teach us to wound and subdue the flesh with fastings, haircloths, and disciplines. “For it is not fitting that the members of a thorn-crowned Head should be delicate,” says S. Bernard. And Tertullian (*ut supra*) teaches us that Christians out of reverence for Christ’s crown of thorns, did not wear crowns of flowers, as the heathen did. Christ offered S. Catharine of Sienna two crowns,—one of jewels, the other of thorns,—on condition that if she chose one of them in this life she should wear the other in the next. She seized at once the crown of thorns from

His hand, and fixed it so firmly on her head that she felt pain for many days, and therefore she received a jewelled crown in heaven. S. Agapitus, a youth of only fifteen, when live coals were put on his head, said exultingly, “It is a small matter that that head which is to be crowned in heaven should be burned on earth,” &c. Think, then, when enduring any kind of pain, that Christ is giving thee one of the thorns from His crown.

Anagogically: S. Ambrose (in Luke xxii.) says, “This crown placed on His head shows that triumphant glory should be won for God from sinners of this world, as if from the thorns of this life.”

Symbolically: S. Bernard (*de Pass. Dom. cap. xix.*) says, “Though they crown Him in derision, yet in their ignorant mockery they confess Him to be a crowned King. Therefore is He proved to be a King by those who knew Him not.” And S. Augustine (*Tract. cxvi. in John*) says, “Thus did the Kingdom which was not of this world overcome the proud world, not with fierce fighting, but lowly suffering. [Jesus comes forth] wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, not resplendent in power, but overwhelmed with reproach.” “Purple,” again says Elias Cratensis, “exhorts good rulers to be ready to shed their blood for the benefit of their subjects.” Hence the purple is given to Cardinals to remind them that they should shed their blood for the Church; and S. Germanus, Patriarch of C. P. (*Orat. in Sepult. Christi*), says that the purple robe and the crown of thorns which was placed on Him before His crucifixion assured the victory to Him who said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

[Pseudo-]Athanasius (*de Cruce*) strikingly says, “When the Lord was arrayed in the purple, there was raised invisibly a trophy over the devil. It was a strange and incredible marvel, and doubtless a token of great victory, that they placed the ornaments of triumph on Him whom they had struck in mockery and derision. He went forth to death in this array, to show that the victory was won expressly for our salvation.” He points out also that Christ was crowned with thorns to restore to us the tree of life, and to heal our worldly cares and anxieties by taking them on Himself.

Godfrey of Bouillon refused on this ground to be crowned king of Jerusalem, since it ill became a Christian king to wear a crown of gold in the very city in which Christ had worn one of thorns.

The tonsure of priests and monks represents this “crown of thorns,” and is a token of their humility and contempt of the world (Bede, *Hist. Angl.* v. 22, and S. Germanus, C. P., in *Theor. rer. Eccles.*).

Anagogically: Tertullian (*de Cor. Mil. cap. xiv.*) says, Put on Christ’s crown of thorns, “that so thou mayest rival that crown which afterwards was His, for it was after the gall that He tasted the honey; nor was He saluted as King by the heavenly hosts till He had been written up upon the Cross as the King of