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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: 37-50

Verse 37- *And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, &c.* He took only these three to be witnesses of His sorrow and agony, lest the other Apostles should be troubled and scandalised thereby. Moreover, Christ most relied on these three as His special intimates, and also because it was but fitting that they who had seen the glory of His transfiguration should contemplate His agony, and learn that the way to glory is through agony and suffering, and that the way of Calvary and the Cross leads to the Mount and glory of Tabor.

And began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Of His own free will, and not by compulsion. He began to be so sore distressed as to be almost lifeless and beside Himself. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," He says, "even unto death." S. Luke calls it "an agony," like those who are at the last struggle with death. Vulg. in Mark reads "*fædet*," for sorrow makes a man weary of life. S. Mark adds, to be stupefied (*ἐκθαμβείσθαι*), for excessive fear has this effect, as a lion stupefies other animals

4. The fourth, the instantaneous healing of Malchus' ear. But how great was their blindness and malice, who, after they had seen so many miracles, dared to lay hands on Him!

Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him. The order is here inverted, for before they could take Him Peter smote off Malchus' ear, and it was only when Jesus had healed it that He gave Himself up to be taken and bound.

struck them blind?” says S. Chrysostom and S. Cyril. “The divine power of Christ shone forth in that, though He presented Himself to those who sought Him, He was not recognised.” Symbolically S. Augustine in John xviii. The eternal day was so hid by human form, as to be sought for with lanterns and torches, in order to be slain by the darkness.

2. His second miracle was His striking them to the ground by the single word, “I am He.” “That word, ‘I am He,’ struck them down like a thunderbolt,” says S. Leo. “Where was their cruel conspiracy? where their glowing anger? where their array of weapons? The Lord saith, I am He, and at His voice the multitude of the ungodly falls prostrate. What will His Majesty do hereafter in judgment, when His humility, though about to be judged, had such power?”

Though “I am He” means only “He whom ye seek,” yet Rupertus explains it, “I am that I am” (Exod. iii.). And S. Jerome (*Ep. cxl. ad Principium*) thinks that Christ struck down these guards with the heavenly splendour of His countenance, for otherwise the Apostles would not have followed Him, nor would those who came to lay hold on Him have fallen to the earth.

Allegorically: This fall of Judas and his followers signified the comparable fall of the Jews, who would be obstinate in their unbelief, and well-nigh incapable of salvation. “Their fall is an image of all those who oppose Christ.” S. Cyr. *Alex. in John xviii.* and S. Augustine *in loc.* “Where is now the band of soldiers, the terror and defence of weapons? A single word, without a weapon, struck down, smote, laid prostrate that crowd, fierce in hatred and terrible in arms. For God was veiled in flesh. What will He do when He comes in judgment, who wrought this when He came to be judged?”

Tropologically: Here is represented the fall of the reprobate, for they fall on their back so that they cannot arise; but when the elect sin, they fall on their face, because they are soon touched by God, and rise up in penitence. “We fall on our face,” says S. Gregory (*Hom. viii. in Ez.*), “because we blush for our sins, which we remember to have committed.” And also (*Mor. xiii. 10*), “To fall on the face is for every one to acknowledge his own faults in this life, and to bewail them with penitence. But to fall on the back, where we cannot see, is to depart suddenly out of life, and to know not to what punishment we are brought.”

Again, “The righteous fall on their face, as looking on those things that are before; but sinners fall on their back, as seeking for those things which are behind and pass away, and are soon gone.” “For everything which passes away,” says S. Gregory (*Mor. xxxiii. 23*), “is behind, while everything which is coming and is permanent is before.”

3. The third miracle, as S. Chrysostom and S. Augustine remark, was that which He wrought by His all-powerful providence and the efficacy of His word. “Let these go their way,” that the Jews laid hands on none of the disciples. He offered Himself alone to death, as a good shepherd laying down His life for the sheep.

with its roar. Note, first, that Christ had true sorrow. For though from the moment of His conception He enjoyed the vision of God, as hypostatically united to Him, and thus enjoyed the highest happiness, He was yet supremely sorrowful, God supernaturally enlarging the capacity of His soul, that it might experience the highest joy and the deepest sorrow at the same time. This is the general opinion of theologians, though Melchior Canus (*de Locis* xii. 14) says that the joy naturally arising from the sight of God was suspended while He was but a sojourner, in order that He might feel sorrow. (See S. Thomas, p. iii. q. 46, art. 8, and Suarez, p. 111, q. 18, *Disp. 38, sect. 8.*) Christ was both on His journey and had reached the end (*viator et comprehensor*). In the one character He was full of sorrow, in the other full of joy. But even when on the way He had both the greatest joy and the greatest sorrow in His Passion. He was sorrowful in His lower nature, since it was painful; He rejoiced in His higher nature, since it was the will of God, and ordained for man’s salvation.

2. This sorrow was not only “in His feelings, but also in His will (at least in its lower part), which naturally regards that which is for itself good as life and death, and hates the contrary. This is clear from His own prayer, “Father, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.” He naturally wished to be saved from death. As in Luke, “Not my will, but Thine be done.”

3. The primary cause of His sorrow was not the flight of His Apostles, which He foresaw, but the vivid apprehension of His approaching Passion and death, as is plain from His prayer, “Let this cup pass from Me.” For Christ foresaw all the torments, one by one, which the Jews would inflict on Him, and fully entered into and weighed the magnitude and bitterness of His several sorrows, so as to seem to be already suffering them, even to the shedding of His blood. For Christ doubtless wished to atone by His sorrow for the pleasure which Adam had in eating the forbidden fruit, and which sinners now experience in their sins.

There were, moreover, other grounds of sorrow, which He experienced in the highest degree from the very moment of His conception to His death. First, the sins of all men, which He undertook to atone for, and thus make satisfaction for the injury done to His Father. For the soul of Christ saw them all in God, and manifested for them the greatest sorrow and compunction, as though they had been His own. For He saw how great was their gravity, how the majesty of God was offended, and consequently what wrong had been done to Him. All which elicited condign and commensurate sorrow. So He says Ps. xxii. 1.

2. The second was His foreseeing all the pains which martyrs, confessors, virgins, married people also would suffer in their several ways. Prelates too and pastors in governing the faithful; the faithful in withstanding the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. All which sorrows Christ generally and severally mentally took upon Him, that by His sorrow He

might obtain for them from God the Father grace and strength to bear and overcome them all. For He loves His children as Himself, and feels for their affliction. See Matt. xxv. 35, 40.

3. The third was the ingratitude of men. For He foresaw that His Passion would be of use to but very few, and that the many would be lost through their own negligence and ingratitude. As the poet sings,-

“’Tis not my grief, ’tis love; my only pain
Is that to thousands ’twill be all in vain.”

4. The fourth was the affliction of His mother; for the sorrows of the Son pierced, as a sword, the soul of the mother, and from her were reflected on Christ. For His greatest sorrow was that His mother suffered so grievously on His account. All other sorrows Christ suppressed and overcame, manifesting this only to His disciples. Now, observe this sorrow of Christ was not by compulsion, or involuntary, so as to prevent the exercise of reason, but was freely undergone by Christ. Whence theologians say that in Christ were not passions, but their first suggestions (*propassiones*); for all His affections resulted from the ordering of His reason and His own free choice. For to this all the inferior powers were perfectly subjected, both in Adam and in Christ. For original righteousness, which was in Christ as in Adam before his fall, required this. See S. Augustine, *de Civ.* xiv. 9, and Damascene (*de Fid.* iii. 23). Nothing was compulsory in Christ, for of His own will He hungered, was fearful, and was sad.

5. S. Luke adds, that He sweated blood, and was comforted by an angel; while Isaiah (liii. 3) calls Him a man of sorrows.

But the final and moral grounds of this were manifold. S. Chrysostom gives as the 1st: “To show that He took on Himself true flesh, He endures human sufferings.” So Jerome and Origen; and S. Leo (*Serm.* vii. *de Pass.*) says, He was despised in our humility, made sad with our sadness, and crucified with our pain.” 2nd S. Gregory (*Mor.* xxiv. 17), “As His death was approaching, He set forth in His own person our struggles of mind, for we fear greatly the approach of death.” The 3rd S. Ambrose sets forth (in Luke xxii. 44), “In no point do I more admire the tenderness and Majesty of Christ than in this, which most men dread. He would have done much less for me had He not taken on Himself my feelings; He took on Him my sorrow, that He might now give me joy. I confidently make mention of His sorrow, for I preach the Cross. He was obliged to endure pain, that He might conquer. Insensibility wins not the praise of fortitude. But He wished to instruct us to overcome the sorrow of coming death, and perhaps He was sad because, after the fall of Adam, death was a necessity, and again because He knew that His persecutors would have to pay the penalty of their monstrous sacrilege.” And again, “Thou smartest not for Thine own wounds, but for ours; not for Thine own death, but for our infirmity.” S. Athanasius (*de Cruce*) writes thus elegantly, “Christ descended to win for us our ascension; was born that we might be reconciled to the unborn Father; was made weak for our sakes, that we might be raised up by His strength, and say with S. Paul, I can do all things through

Verse 50- *And Jesus said unto Him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? If thou comest to betray Me, why givest thou Me this friendly kiss? But if thou comest as a friend, why bringest thou so many enemies against Me? “Thou kissest Me,” says S. Augustine, “and layest snares for Me. Thou pretendest to be a friend, though thou art a traitor.” Hence Luke adds that Christ said, “Judas, why betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” And such words, full of majesty and love, ought to have wounded his stony heart, unless he had hardened it like iron.*

It was a wondrous instance of Christ’s gentleness and patience, that He tolerated Judas for three years, and deprived him not of his Apostolate, or disclosed to any one his sin. Teaching us to overcome our wrongs by love. The Saints in this matter imitated Christ, S. Martin especially in his treatment of Brice, one of his clerks, who was constantly calumniating him. And when blamed for it, he said, “Christ bore with Judas the traitor, and should not I bear with Brice my calumniator?” By this gentleness he so won upon him, that he amended his ways, became a Saint, and succeeded S. Martin as Bishop, as S. Martin had foretold (*Sulp. in Vit. S. Martin*).

The passage, John xviii. 4, should here come in, in the regular course of the narrative. To harmonise S. John with the other Evangelists the order of the history is as follows:—Judas preceded the crowd by a few steps, so as not to seem to be one of them; and then, when he had kissed Christ, he drew back into the crowd again, and when Jesus boldly confronted the crowd, Judas was standing with them. Jesus thus boldly asked them, “Whom seek ye?” and on Jesus saying that He was Jesus of Nazareth whom they were seeking, they were thunderstruck, and fell to the ground; not on their faces, but backward, so as to make it clear that they were struck down by His power. He allowed them, however, to rise up again, and on their saying again that they were seeking Christ, He replied, “I told you that I am He; if, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way,” showing that He cared more for them than for Himself.

Observe (with S. Chrysostom and S. Cyril) that the eyes of the soldiers were miraculously blinded, so that they could not discern, and much less lay hold on Christ. (S. Augustine thinks otherwise.) They gather this from the reply, “We seek Jesus of Nazareth,” as though they knew not it was He. S. Chrysostom and others suppose that even Judas did not recognise Him. But he seems to have withdrawn rather from horror at his crime. For Christ cut him off from the Apostolic band, “Begone, O traitor; thou art not worthy of the companionship of Me and Mine,” and then struck him and the whole band to the earth. This was the first miracle which Christ wrought when He was seized, to manifest His Divine majesty and omnipotence, and that the Jews might learn that they would have come in vain against Him with the armed band, had not He given Himself gracefully and willingly into their hands. The Sodomites were struck with a like blindness (Gen. xix. 11). “Seest thou His surprising power, that though standing in their midst He

men, against your Creator, and compel Him to give Himself into your hands? "It was avarice," says S. Chrysostom, "which inspired him with this madness, avarice which makes all its slaves cruel and fierce; for if the covetous man neglect his own salvation, what will he care for another?"

Verse 48- *Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold him fast.* Lest He escape, as He did at other times. "And lead Him away carefully," adds S. Mark. For Judas was afraid lest Christ should escape by changing His shape, and that He should thus lose the thirty pieces of silver, which were not as yet given, but only promised.

Gave them a sign. That the Roman soldiers might know him. For it was night. And perhaps, as some moderns suggest, from His likeness to S. James the Less, His kinsman.

I shall kiss. Origen mentions a tradition that Christ had two countenances, one natural, the other assumed at will, as at His transfiguration, and that Judas gave this sign for fear Christ should alter His appearance, so as not to be recognised. But this is a gratuitous assumption, and not to the point, for Judas was not present at the Transfiguration; and even had he been there, he might reasonably fear that Christ might render Himself invisible, as He knew He had done at other times. The true reason is as given above.

Verse 49- *And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him.* Judas knew from Christ's words at the Last Supper that he and his treachery were known to Christ; but yet, in order to hide it from the other Apostles, he pretends to give Christ the usual mark of friendship and reverence. It was the ancient mode of salutation. The Apostles probably saluted Christ in this manner, when returning back to Him from some other place. The early Christians also used to salute each other in the same way (see Tert. *de Orat.*, and 1 Cor. xvi. 20). But Judas most wickedly misused this token of friendship for the purpose of betrayal, being persuaded (says S. Chrysostom) that Christ in His gentleness would not reject his kiss, and that if He rejected it, the sign would yet have been given. S. Victor of Antioch says, "The unhappy man gave the kiss of peace to Him against whom he was laying deadly snares." "Giving," says pseudo-Jerome, "the sign of the kiss with the poison of deceit." Moreover, though Christ felt deeply, and was much pained at His betrayal by Judas, yet He refused not his kiss, and gave him a loving kiss in return. 1. "That He might not seem to shrink from treachery" (S. Ambrose in Luke xxi. 45), but willingly to embrace it and even greater indignities, for our sake. 2. To soften and pierce the heart of Judas (S. Ambrose, *ibid.*); and 3. To teach us to love our enemies and those whom we know would rage against us (S. Hilary). For Christ hated not, but loved the traitor, and grieved more at his sin than at His own betrayal, and accordingly strove to lead him to repentance. Just as the spark of fire is elicited from the steel, so was Christ's latent love elicited by His blows and sufferings. His love was pre-eminent through the whole of His Passion.

Jesus Christ that strengtheneth me. He assumed a corruptible body, that the corruptible might put on incorruption; a mortal body, that mortality might put on immortality. Lastly, He became man, and died, that we men might by dying become gods, and no longer have death reigning over us." 4th The fourth was to mitigate the dread of death, which was inflicted as a punishment for Adam's sin, and turn it into joy and the hope of attaining a better life. Christ then obtained for the martyrs exemption from pain and fear in their grievous torments, and caused them to undergo them willingly, and even to rejoice in them. "Christ came," says S. Chrysostom, "to bear our infirmities, and to give us His strength. And again, Christ by His agony enabled His faithful ones not to fear death, but patiently and even joyfully to meet it from their hope in the resurrection, saying with Hosea and S. Paul, as triumphing over death, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Cor. xv. 55).

5th The fifth was to cure by His sorrow our sloth, weakness, fear, &c. As Isaiah (liiii. 4) says, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." And accordingly our best remedy in all these trials is to look at Christ in His agony, that by the pattern and merits of the agony He endured in the garden He may heal our sorrow. As S. Leo (*Serm. iv. de Pass.*) says, "He healed our weaknesses by partaking them, and drove away the fear of suffering punishment by undergoing it Himself: our Lord trembled with our fear, that He might take on Himself our weakness, and robe our weakness with His strength." It was, again, to remove the dread of difficulty, which occurs in every virtuous act. For this dread keeps many back from virtue and holiness. Whenever, therefore, any difficulty or temptation assails, let us strengthen ourselves by meditating on the agony of Christ; for if He overcame His by the struggle and bloody sweat, we ought also to overcome ours by manly resistance. See Heb. xii. 1.

Christ then taught us to fight against our passions with reason and judgment, especially our sloth, sadness, and anxiety. Calvin and Beza here impiously and unlearnedly accuse Christ of timidity, inconstancy, and vacillation, as being indeed more cowardly than the martyrs; rather He not only willingly underwent these sufferings, but brought them of His own accord on Himself, that He might by His bold struggle overcome them in Himself, and subdue them also in us. For, as S. Augustine says, "Christ was troubled when exercising His power, and not in His weakness" [John xi. 33]

Verse 38- *Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me.* I am as sorrowful from the lively apprehension of My sufferings and death, as if I were now dying; I seem to be lifeless with sorrow and dread. My pain well-nigh takes away My life and breath. It is not My flesh, but My soul, which is so very sad, for sorrow penetrates the inmost parts of My soul, and cuts it in sunder as a sword. "The waters have come in even to My soul," Ps. lxxix. 1. I am but the smallest point removed from death, so that the slightest addition to My

sorrow would crush Me, and take away My life. Consider with what feeling of sorrow and love Christ spake these words,—His pathos, His look, His voice, His countenance, —*Tarry ye here*. Wait and behold Me here, deeply sorrowing and praying in the agony of death, both as witnesses of My sorrow, and to learn from Me in every tribulation to betake yourselves to prayer; so that thus watching ye may be some solace to Me in My affliction. But it is not so; for sorrow hath overwhelmed you, and forces you to sleep. Whence Christ complains (Ps. lxxix. 21), “I waited for some to have pity on Me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me.” Christ from the vehemence of His love wished to pass through His unmitigated and wondrous Passion without any consolation or consoler. He wished to drain the chalice of gall and bitterness unmixed with the sweetness of honey, both in order that His redemption should be plenteous, and for an example of heroic virtue. For Christ manifested in His Passion the most perfect acts of heroic virtue. And He Himself was therein a prodigy of humanity; for though “He was in the form of God . . . He became obedient as far as unto death, even the death of the Cross,” Phil. ii. 8. He was also therein a prodigy of patience, fortitude, and of charity; for “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John xv. 13). But Christ laid down His for His enemies (Rom. v. 8).

Verse 39- *And He went a little farther, and fell on His face*. For a few steps, that He might pray in secret, and yet be seen and heard by them. By this prostration He manifested His extreme suffering, gave a striking example of humility, and the highest reverence to God the Father. Again, to set forth the heavy burden of our sins, which He had taken upon Him, and present Himself to the Father in our stead as though guilty and penitent, and submit Himself entirely to chastisement, I surrender Myself, He says, to Thee, O Father, as guilty, in the place of men. I give up Myself entirely to Thee, and present to Thee the punishment due to them. I offer My back to the scourger, My head to the crown of thorns, My hands and feet to the nails, and My entire body to the cross. Wound and crucify Me, that man may be spared and received back into Thy favour.

And prayed, saying. For as man He in a true and proper sense prayed to the Father, yea, even to Himself as God. On the spot where He prayed a church was erected, and the marks of His footsteps were said by Baronius to be still there.

O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Absolutely this was possible, but it was impossible according to God’s decree that man was to be redeemed by Christ’s death. Christ knew this, and therefore did not wish for it absolutely, and asks for nothing contrary to His own and the Father’s will. But He merely expresses His natural shrinking from death, His ineffectual and conditioned will, and yet freely submitted Himself to the contrary will of God, that He should die.

Let this cup pass from Me. Calvin here accuses our Lord of hastiness, forgetfulness, ignorance, darkness of mind, inconstancy, and opposition to the Divine will—in fact, ascribing to Him sin. But, as I before observed, Christ took all this upon Him voluntarily, yet in accordance with the will of God. His first act was subordinated to

thrown off His sadness and sorrow, and went forth to meet Judas and the death of the cross with great and noble resolution. “For,” as Origen says, “He saw in the spirit Judas the traitor drawing nigh, though he was not yet seen by the disciples.” “He therefore in every way teaches His disciples,” says S. Chrysostom, “that this was not a matter of necessity or of weakness, but of a certain incomprehensible dispensation, for He foresaw that they were coming, and so far from flying, He went forth to meet them.”

Christ in thus going forth, as indeed in the whole of His Passion, left three points most worthy of notice. 1st His innocence in boldly going forth to meet His enemies. 2nd His majesty, forethought, and power, wherewith as God He orders and foretells the approach of His enemies, and so moderates their fury that they could do no more than He permitted and foreordained. 3rd The readiness with which He voluntarily met Judas, to show that it was not from weakness or unwillingness, but with the highest dignity, condescension, and generous love that He suffered and died for us. “Rise, let us be going,” to meet Judas; and, as S. Jerome says, “let us go of our own accord to death.”

Morally: Christ here teaches us to arouse ourselves, and go forth to meet our sufferings. It is the act of an heroic mind to weaken by its own resolution the force of any imminent evil, and by voluntarily embracing it to overcome and subdue it. Great evils are more easily overcome by a great mind than minor evils by a small one. As says the poet, “Yield not to trials; boldly go to meet them, as a lion shuts its eyes when rushing on its foes” (Plin. *N.H.* viii. 16). The cross therefore pursues those who fly from it, and flies those who seek for it As is said of honour.

Verse 47- *And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve came, &c.* This is more fully set forth, John xviii 2. The truth of His prediction and foreordaining was thus made good. He so interwove Judas’ sin and His Passion, that the whole action appeared to be partly permitted and partly ordained by Him.

Lo, Judas, one of the twelve. Lo is an expression of wonder. An unheard-of portent, a stupendous crime, that one of the Apostles was not only a thief and robber, but the traitor, and the leader of those who killed Christ! “He went before them,” says S. Luke.

A great multitude: of Roman soldiers, high priests’ servants, &c.

Staves: tipped with iron, as spears, &c., or not so tipped, as clubs. Observe here the folly and madness of Judas and the Jews. He knew that He was a very great prophet, nay, the Son of God, who could not be overcome by force, as the Jews well knew, and yet, maddened with avarice and fury, they bring armed men to use violence towards Him, to seize and bind Him. Dost thou wish, O Judas, to bind God, to seize the Almighty, to fight, O petty

prayer, we should pray more frequently and fervently, till He hears us, and we obtain our request. Perseverance crowns the work, in prayer especially. And if Christ was not heard in His first and second prayer, what wonder if we are not heard at once? Let us persevere, and we shall gain the fruit of our prayer, strengthening, calming of sorrow, and power of mind to withstand and overcome our trials.

Symbolically: 1. Remigius says, “He prays thrice for the Apostles, and especially for Peter, who was about to deny Him thrice.” 2. Rabanus says “that He prayed thrice, in order that we should ask pardon for past sins, protection in present, and caution in future perils; that we should direct all our prayers to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that our body, soul, and spirit should be preserved blameless.” 3. S. Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. in loc.*) says, “It is not unreasonable to conclude that our Lord prayed thrice, in consequence of our temptation being threefold. For as the temptation of desire is threefold, so also is the temptation of fear. The fear of death is opposed to the desire of curiosity. For as in the one there is the desire of knowledge, so in the other is the fear of losing it. But to the desire for honour or praise there is opposed the fear of disgrace and contumely, and to the desire of pleasure there is opposed the fear of pain.”

Verse 45- *Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them.* Being after His third prayer strengthened by an angel, He resumed His former courage and spirit, and nobly composed Himself to meet His Passion (see on Luke xxii. 41).

Sleep on now, and take your rest. S. Chrysostom and others suppose that this was said ironically. This is no time for sleeping in our moment of extreme peril; rouse yourselves now, if ever.

But S. Augustine (*de Cons. Evan.* iii. 4), and Bede after him, suppose that Christ spoke seriously, and in compassion for them granted them a little longer rest. “Sleep on for the short time that remains till Judas arrives.”

Behold, the hour has arrived. Fixed from eternity by the Father, and decreed for My Passion and death.

And the Son of Man is betrayed, i.e., is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners—sinners in a special manner, such as Judas and the Jews who were raging against Him. For there was no nation more wicked at that time, and therefore Christ had resolved to be born and die at that very time, in order that He might suffer more atrocious cruelties from such a people. His supreme goodness resolved to do battle with their consummate malice, in order that He might crush in them, as its head, the malice of all men, subject it to Himself, and convert it into goodness. The divine clemency and power of Christ were equally manifested in converting to Himself and making saints of those self-same wicked Jews, by Peter and the other apostles.

Verse 46- *Rise, let us be going: behold, he hath come who will betray Me.* He bids them rise, not in order to fly with Him, but to go forth to meet Judas. It is hence clear that Christ was heard in His last prayer; that, comforted of God by the angel, He had

the latter act, and was therefore regulated and ordered by right reason; for nothing in Christ could be disordered and out of place. Reason, then, and the higher nature were justly unwilling that His inferior nature should feel sorrow and horror of death, as stated above. 2. S. Jerome understands by the “cup,” the sin of the Jews. I pray, O Father, that I may not suffer at the hand of the Jews, my kinsmen. For in killing Me they commit a most awful crime, and will be punished most severely in hell. But this is too restricted a meaning.

3. The full and adequate meaning is, that this cup of suffering should pass away, even though Thou hast decreed that I should drink it to the dregs; and thus (as Origen says) it should pass away from Himself, and the whole race of mankind.

4. S. Catharine of Sienna offered two other explanations, which she said were revealed to her by Christ. The first, that Christ most eagerly thirsted for this cup, to manifest His love to the Father, and to effect our redemption. He wished to die and suffer immediately. His love admitted not any delay. I wish the cup to pass away, and that I may return at once to Thee. This was the prayer of His spirit, though in His flesh He dreaded death. The two meanings are compatible. But why did He not effect His wish? It was (1) in order to give the martyrs an example of longing for the Cross; (2) Because so many would be unthankful for His Passion, and would die in their sins; and as this was His greatest sorrow, He prays that this “cup” might be taken away, and that all might be saved. But yet He chose to conform Himself to His Father’s will, “Not My will,” &c. So S. Catharine, not taking it literally, but expressing the holy and ardent affection of Christ.

Symbolically: S. Hilary says, “Christ took all our infirmities and nailed them to the Cross, and therefore that cup could not pass away from Him without His drinking it, for we cannot suffer except through His Passion.” May that cup, O Father, pass over to My own followers, that when enduring My suffering they may experience also through My gift My strength and power to endure.

S. Bernard (*Serm. x. in Cant.*) piously and wisely remarks, “The cup Thou didst drink, the mark of our redemption, makes Thee above all things lovely. It is this which readily claims our entire love. It both more tenderly attracts our devotion, more justly demands it, binds us to Thee the more firmly, and affects us the more vehemently. For great was the Saviour’s labour, greater than in the work of creation. For He spake and it was done. But here He had those who contradicted His words, watched His actions, jested at Him in His torments, and reproached Him in His death. Behold how He loved! Learn thou, O Christian, from Christ Himself, how to love Him. Learn to love Him sweetly, wisely, and firmly: sweetly, that we may not be allured away; wisely, that we be not deceived; and firmly, that we may not by force be drawn away from the love of the Lord,” &c.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Here it is plain, as against the Monothelites, that there are two wills in Christ: not only the Divine, to supply the place of the human will, as they said, but the will He had as man, by which He obtained our redemption. The Sixth Synod (Acts 4 and 10) proves that there were in Him two wills, and that the human was by obedience subject to the Divine; and this on the authority of SS. Athanasius, Augustine, Ambrose, and Leo. Nay, rather, though the human will was in itself one, yet in its power and action it was twofold, the one natural, with which it shrank from death; the other rational and free, with which He subjected Himself to the will of God. “Nevertheless, not what I will” naturally, “but what Thou wilt.” By My reasonable will I subject My natural will to Thee, O Father, and only will what Thou willest. And, accordingly, the natural will of Christ was conditional and of no avail, because it wished to escape death only under the condition that it pleased God. But His rational will was absolute and effectual, because He embraced death for the same reason that God willed it, that is, for man’s redemption. But the natural will of Christ seemed materially contrary to the Divine will. But by the rule of subordination it was conformable to it, as suffering itself to be guided by the rational will, and thus by the Divine will; and, on the other hand, the will of God, as well as the rational will of Christ, wishes on deliberate and just ground that His natural will should express this natural fear of death. In both aspects, therefore, was the will of Christ in all respects conformable to the Divine. Christ here teaches us, as a moral duty, that our sole remedy in affliction is submission to the Divine will, and that in every temptation we must betake ourselves to the aid of God, who alone can free us from them or strengthen us under them if we submit ourselves humbly, reverently, and lovingly to His will. “This voice of the Head,” says S. Leo, “is the salvation of the whole body; It taught the faithful, it inspired confessors, it crowned the martyrs. For who could overcome the hatred of the world, the whirlwinds of temptations, the terrors of persecution, had not Christ in all and for all said in submission to His Father, Thy will be done?”

Verse 40- *And He cometh to His disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? To gain some consolation, little though it were, and also as having care for His people; thus teaching bishops and pastors to do the like, and to break off prayer in order to visit them. They were sleeping for sorrow, and He speaks to Peter as the head of the rest, and as having so boldly professed his allegiance to Christ.*

But observe how gently and tenderly He reproves them. He does not reproach them with their grand promises; but He merely says, “Could ye not?” Ye wished indeed to watch, but I attribute your sleep not to your will, but to your weakness: arouse yourselves, overcome your infirmity, shake off sleep.

Mystically: “He signified,” says S. Irenæus, “that His Passion is the awakening of sleepers.”

Verse 41- *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Of denying and forsaking Me for fear of the Jews. If my dangers move you not, may your own do so. There hangs over you the great temptation of denying Me; watch and pray to overcome it. “The

more spiritual a man is,” says Origen, “the more anxious should he be lest his great goodness should have a great fall.” Watchfulness and prayer are the great means of foreseeing and overcoming the arts of devils and men.

Verse 41 (Continued)- *Enter into temptation.* Be not ensnared, as birds in a net and fishes with a hook. Not to be tempted is often not in our own power, nor is it God’s will for us. He wills we should be tempted, to try our faith, to increase our virtue, and to crown our deserts. But we must not enter into temptation, so that it should occupy, possess, and rule over us. So Theophylact and S. Jerome.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. I know your readiness in spirit, but your weakness in the flesh. By the flesh is meant our natural feelings, which shrink from suffering and death. Pray, therefore, that your weak flesh may not enfeeble your spirit and compel it to deny Me; but may God by His grace so strengthen both your spirit and your flesh, that ye may not only be ready, but strong to overcome all adversities, so that for My sake ye may eagerly wish for death, and bravely endure it. “The more, therefore,” says S. Jerome, “we trust to the warmth of our feelings, the more let us fear for the weakness of the flesh.” Some understand (less suitably) by “spirit” the devil, by the “flesh” man. That is, the devil is powerful to tempt, man is feeble to resist. Origen, moreover, observes “the flesh of all is weak, but it is only the spirit of the saints which is ready to mortify the deeds of the flesh.” S. Mark adds, “And they knew not what to answer, for they were struck down by their grief, and oppressed with sleep, and had neither sense nor understanding.”

Verse 42- *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done.* S. Mark says that He used the same words as before. But S. Matthew omitted the first part of the prayer as without efficacy or meaning, and in order to insist on the latter part in which the whole force of the passage consists, and set it forth for our imitation. For Christ absolutely wished and prayed to drink the cup of His Passion, which was decreed and destined for Him by the will of God. For He plainly and expressly asked that the will of God might be fulfilled in Him in and through all things.

Verse 43- *And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.* With sorrow and watching, and afterwards with sleep. “For,” says S. Chrysostom, “it was a wild night,” adding that “Christ did not reprove them, since their weakness was great.”

Verse 44- *And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, using the same words.* 1st To show the intensity of His sorrow; for, as S. Luke says, He sweated blood, and an angel comforted Him. But this was only when He prayed the third time, and not the first and second time, as Jansen maintains. 2nd To teach us that if God hears us not in our first