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CHAPTER 23: 1-56

The Gospel of
Luke

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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.

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

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.

Luke 23: 1-56

Douay Rheims Version

The continuation of the history of the passion.

1. And the whole multitude of them, rising up, led him to Pilate.
2. And they began to accuse him, saying: We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he is Christ the king.
3. And Pilate asked him, saying: Art thou the king of the Jews? But he answering, said: Thou sayest it.
4. And Pilate said to the chief priests and to the multitudes: I find no cause in this man.
5. But they were more earnest, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.

6. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the man were of Galilee?
7. And when he understood that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days.
8. And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad: for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by him.
9. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing.
10. And the chief priests and the scribes stood by, earnestly accusing him.
11. And Herod with his army set him at nought and mocked him, putting on him a white garment: and sent him back to Pilate.
12. And Herod and Pilate were made friends, that same day: for before they were enemies one to another.
13. And Pilate, calling together the chief priests and the magistrates and the people,
14. Said to them: You have presented unto me this man as one that perverteth the people. And behold I, having examined him before you, find no cause in this man, in those things wherein you accuse him.
15. No, nor Herod neither. For, I sent you to him: and behold, nothing worthy of death is done to him.
16. I will chastise him therefore and release him.
17. Now of necessity he was to release unto them one upon the feast day.
18. But the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:
19. Who, for a certain sedition made in the city and for a murder, was cast into prison.
20. And Pilate again spoke to them, desiring to release Jesus.
21. But they cried again, saying: Crucify him, Crucify him.
22. And he said to them the third time: Why, what evil hath this man done? I find no cause of death in him. I will chastise him therefore and let him go.
23. But they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And their voices prevailed.
24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.
25. And he released unto them him who for murder and sedition had been cast into prison, whom they had desired. But Jesus he delivered up to their will.
26. And as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus.
27. And there followed him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented him.
28. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children.
29. For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne and the paps that have not given suck.
30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us. And to the hills: Cover us.

31. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?
 32. And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death.
 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there: and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
 34. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But they, dividing his garments, cast lots.
 35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers with them derided him, saying: He saved others: let him save himself, if he be Christ, the elect of God.
 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar,
 37. And saying: If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.
 38. And there was also a superscription written over him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
 39. And one of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed him, saying: If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
 40. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing; thou art under the same condemnation?
 41. And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done no evil.
 42. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.
 43. And Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee: This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.
 44. And it was almost the sixth hour: and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
 45. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.
 46. And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost.
 47. Now, the centurion, seeing what was done, glorified God, saying: Indeed this was a just man.
 48. And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight and saw the things that were done returned, striking their breasts.
 49. And all his acquaintance and the women that had followed him from Galilee stood afar off, beholding these things.
 50. And behold there was a man named Joseph who was a counsellor, a good and a just man,
 51. (The same had not consented to their counsel and doings) of Arimathea, a city of Judea: who also himself looked for the kingdom of God.
 52. This man went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.
 53. And taking him down, he wrapped him in fine linen and laid him in a sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet any man had been laid.
 54. And it was the day of the Parasceve: and the sabbath drew on.
 55. And the women that were come with him from Galilee, following after, saw the sepulchre and how his body was laid.
 56. And returning, they prepared spices and ointments: and on the sabbath day they rested, according to the commandment.

most bitterly, from the devils, we implore the assistance of God, that in giving back our souls to Him, we may overcome and triumph over the devil. Hence many think that each of us has his own peculiar devil, who appears to the dying in some terrible form, and tempts them to despair, and to other sins, as he did to S. Martha and others, but not to all. S. Ephrem seems to think this in his sermon on those who sleep in Christ. S. Chrysostom (Hom. 34 on S. Matt.), and others whom our own Lorinus cites on Eccles viii. 8. Many think the same of Christ. Hence Eusebius (*Demonstrat. Lib. iv. cap. ult.*) understands Christ's words, Ps. xxii. 12, "Many strong bulls of Basan have beset me round," of devils whom Christ saw, mocking Him on the cross as a criminal and wicked, and insulting Him for His crucifixion and impending death. Habakkuk seems to support this idea, iii. 5: "Burning coals" (diabolus) went forth at His feet;" and S. John, xiv. 30: "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me." Christ lays down His Spirit therefore into the hands of God, certain that no one can sever Him from it. For God is a most faithful and strong protector. So S. Jerome on Psalm xxxi. 5, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." That is, "into Thy power." This example the Church received from Christ, and S. Stephen followed it. The saints when departing, use the same words; as the following: "They commend their souls to the faithful Creator for His good acts;" our Lord said this, when hanging on the cross, commending His Spirit to the hands of the Father as being to receive it again at the resurrection.

Symbolically, Didymus in his *Catena* on Psalm xxxi. "The spirit is threefold—

1. Our thought.
2. Our soul.
3. Our conscience.

These three we ought to commend to God."

And having said thus, He gave up the ghost. The Syriac. "He said this, and ended," His life, that is. The Arabic, "And when He had said this He gave up His Spirit." This was a certain sign that He was the Son of God the Father, who was called upon by Him, and that the Father heard the cry of the Son and received His soul. "For when He had said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit;' then, at last, He suffered death to come to Him." Says Euthymius, on Matt. xxvii: "As certainly knowing that the spirit, placed in His hands as a deposit, the Father would keep securely, and would give back in the resurrection on the third day. Firm in this hope He gladly and with alacrity rendered up His Spirit to the Father."

(patibulum) as an arbiter between the two condemned, rejected him who denied, and received the one who confessed; on the latter He bestows a kingdom, the former He leaves in hell. Let us then believe that He will come to judge, whom we see to have already on the cross exercised judgment." This is that most sweet answer of Christ to the thief which Fulgentius (*serm. nov.* 60), calls "the testament of Christ, written with the pen of the cross."

Lastly, the name of this most blessed thief is said to have been Dismas, for some chapels are found, in the name of "Dismas the Robber." His day in the Catalogue of Saints is the 25th March, for on that day he seems to have suffered, and Christ in consequence on the same day. For we find in it, "At Jerusalem, the commemoration of the holy thief who confessed Christ on the cross, and who therefore merited to hear 'This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'"

Ver. 46.—*Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.* The Arabic has *pono*, Tertullian *depono* (*cont. Prax. cap. xxv.*). The Hebrew word *Hiphid* means the same as our "commend." "*My Spirit.*" S. Athanasius in his work *De Human. Nat. cont. Apollin.*, says, "When Christ said on the cross, Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit, He commends all men to the Father, to be, by Him and through Him, restored to life; for we are members, and those many members are one body, which is the Church. He commends therefore all who are in Him to God." Christ therefore, according to S. Athanasius, calls men His soul and spirit. What then ought we not to do to profit and save souls, that we may keep as it were for Christ, His soul and spirit? So S. Paul to Philemon and Onesimus, "His bowels." "He gave His life," says S. Cyril, "into the hands of His Father (*Lib. ii on John chap. xxxvi.*), that by this and through this, as a beginning, we might have certain hope of this, firmly believing that we shall be in the hands of God after our death." So Victor Antiochus on S. Mark, "This recommendation of Christ tends to the good of our souls, which, when freed from the bodies previously inhabited by them, He gave by these words, as a kind of deposit, into the hands of the living God." And Euthymius: "God did this for us, that the souls of the just should not henceforth go down into hell, but should rather ascend to God." He cites Ps. xxxi. 5, when David, afflicted and in danger of death, spoke as much in his own person as in that of Christ and said, "into Thy hands I commend my spirit." And, from this, the Church daily uses the same Psalm and verse, and sings it in the Compline at night, to teach us, when we retire to rest, to commend our souls to God, because at night we run many risks of sudden death. The dying use the same words, as did S. Nicholas, Louis King of France, and S. Basil. S. Basil did it in the presence of angels, who brought him away; as S. Gregory Nazianzen testifies in his oration on him. S. Stephen also cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

By these words we testify—1. That at our birth we received our souls, not from our father and mother, but from God alone; and that we therefore give Him back the same, as His own creatures. 2. That we believe that our souls do not die at our death, but survive and are immortal, and return to God who gave them and who will judge them. 3. That we believe in the resurrection of the flesh. For in death we commend our souls to God that He may keep them, as it were as a deposit, and restore them again at the resurrection to our bodies. 4. That in the last agony which we undergo,

Ver. 39.—*And one of the malefactors which were hanged*—(this one, according to tradition, hung on the left hand of Christ)—*railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

If thou be the Christ, and Saviour of the world, save Thyself and us, free us from the cross and restore us to life and liberty. Christ chose to undergo the most bitter sufferings from all classes, and to be mocked and blasphemed, not only by the scribes and Jews, but even by the robber, the companion of His punishment. This made His trial the more hard; for the robber ought to have suffered with Christ and to have taken thought for the salvation of his soul, and to have begged it of Christ; as we also should beg that we may be quiet under scoffs, derisions, and insults, and be patient in mind and silent in speech.

Ver. 40.—*But the other* (who is said to have hung on the right side) *answering rebuked him.* The Syriac says, "Dost thou not fear, no, not even from God" (etiam, non, a Deo, non tirmes tu)?—that is, the scribes and Jews are well and strong and do not fear God, and therefore scoff at Christ; but thou, who art tormented on the cross, oughtest to fear Him, lest He punish thee severely, for blaspheming His Christ so sacrilegiously. This robber showed that he not only feared God himself, for "the beginning of wisdom" (and salvation) "is the fear of the Lord" (Ecclus. i. 16), but he also exhorted his companion to the same fear. That is, Let the Jews mock at Christ; we ought to fear God, because we are in the same condemnation—the punishment of the cross, to which we are justly condemned. But Christ, who was innocent was so condemned unjustly. Again, we should rather compassionate a companion in punishment, especially if innocent, than reproach him; because we ought to prepare ourselves for death and the judgment of God, where we shall give account for our blasphemy and undergo the heavy punishment of Gehenna. In his words, "Dost thou not fear God?" he seems to allude to Christ and to confess Him to be God. As if he had said, "Fear thou the retribution of Christ, whom thou blasphemest, for He is not only man but God also." For, that he believed this from Christ's illumination we shall shortly see. So S. Ambrose, and Eusebius, whose words I will produce.

Ver. 41.—*And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.* This was an act of profound and public confession, contrition, and repentance, by which he expiated his former sins.

But this man hath done nothing amiss. The Greek is *ἀτοπον*, which means out of harmony, unbecoming incongruous, nothing worthy of the slightest blame or reprehension. Lo! a free and public confession of, and testimony to, the innocence of Christ, given before the scribes and rulers, who had condemned Him, fearing nothing.

Ver. 42.—*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest*

into Thy kingdom. “The heavenly and divine kingdom, to which Thou passest through the death of the cross, that shortly Thou mayest enter into it by death, and bring into it Thine elect. Wherefore I beseech Thee to bring me also into it with Thyself, and I implore of Thee pardon for all sinners, for whom I very greatly grieve. I offer to Thee, moreover, the torments of this cross, and the death upon it which I willingly undergo. To this end, I wholly resign, dedicate, and consecrate myself to Thee; I would that I were given to me to suffer these and still other torments for Thy faith and love.” These words show his living and ardent faith, hope, love, humility, patience, contrition, and other virtues.

Moraliter. Learn from this the strength, efficacy, and swiftness of the grace of Christ, by which, from the cross itself, He made a man holy, most holy. Wonderful was the conversion of S. M. Magdalene—wonderful that of S. Paul, but much more wonderful this of the thief. For S. Mary had witnessed the words and miracles, of Christ; and S. Paul had felt Him strike him from heaven; but the thief on the very cross, where Christ was suffering the infamous and atrocious death of a criminal, was converted to Him by heroic acts of faith, love, devotion, &c.

SS. Jerome, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius, on S. Matt. xxvii., Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Lectures, xiii., Origen, Tract xxxv. on S. Matt., say that this thief had first blasphemed Christ with his companion, for SS. Matt. and Mark say in the plural “the thieves reproached Him,” though SS. Augustine, Epiphanius, Anselm and others think, like Suarez, with more probability, the contrary. These think that one of them was called “the thieves” by synecdoche, for S. Luke says that one blasphemed and the other confessed. If one of them blasphemed first, so much the greater miracle that conversion by which he suddenly changed blasphemy into the confession and praise of Christ. This change of the thief was “the right hand of the High One” (Ps. cxviii. 15, 16; *dextera Excelsi*). It may be asked by what means he was converted. I reply, 1. Outwardly, by the example of the virtues which he discerned in Christ, namely, His singular love, by which he heard Him praying for His enemies, His patience, fortitude, religion, and all virtues. So Theophylact and Euthymius, c. 67, on S. Matt. 2. Inwardly, by the rare and almost miraculous motion and representation of God, by which he knew Christ to be innocent and the King of a higher kingdom and the supreme Lord, in whose power it was to make even a dead man happy; and therefore that He was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. So S. Leo (*Serm. ii. de Pass.*): “What exhortation persuaded him to the faith? What teaching instilled it? What preacher kindled it? He had not seen the miracles performed previously; the healing of the sick had ceased; the giving of sight to the blind, the recalling of the dead to life, the things that were about to happen had not taken place yet, and he still confesses Christ to be the Lord, whom he saw to be a partaker of his own suffering. Hence came this gift, hence this faith received its answer.” Observe the above words, “the things that were about to happen had not taken place yet,” for they seem silently to reprove those of S. Jerome, on chap. xxvii. S. Matt., “When the sun disappeared, and the earth was moved, and the rocks were rent, and the darkness rushed down, one thief began to believe and to confess Christ.” This opinion of S. Jerome is stated by S. Chrysostom almost in the same words, in his second Homily “On the Cross and the Thief,” and by Origen, in tract 34 on S. Matt.

Christ answered S. Bridget when she prayed for a penitent sinner who had no means of confession, in these words: “He laments because he has none to hear his confession; tell him that the will is sufficient. For what benefited the thief on the cross? Was it not his good will? Or what opened heaven to him but his wish to desire good and hate evil? What makes hell but an evil inclination and inordinate concupiscence?” This is found in the sixth book of the Revelations of S. Bridget, chap. 115. See further, T. Reynaud in a learned work he wrote on the change of the thief into an Apostle—where, chap. xvii., he says, “He formed figurative honey by Christian bees, which they gathered from the meadows of the holy thief.”

Ver. 43.—*And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* That is, in a place of pleasure where thou mayest be in the beatitude and beatific vision of God, *i.e.* To-day I will make thee for ever happy; I will make thee a king reigning in the kingdom of glory with me this day. So S. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechet. Lect. c. 13*); S. Chrysostom (*Hom. ii. de Cruce et Latrone*); S. Gregory of Nyssa (*Serm. on the Resurrection*); S. Augustine (*Tract. III on John*). He explains paradise by heaven, that is celestial beatitude. It is certain that Christ on the day on which He died, did not go up to heaven with the thief, but went down into the *Limbus Patrum* (S. Augustine *Lib. ii. de Genese ad litt.* chap. 34; and Maldonatus by paradise here understand Abraham’s bosom), and imparted to them the vision of His Godhead and thus made them blest, changing the order of things; for He then made limbus to be paradise, and the lower parts the upper, so that hell should be heaven. For where Christ is, there is paradise; where, the vision and beatitude of God, there, heaven. For, as to what Euthymius and other Greeks say, denying that the souls of the saints see God before the judgment and are happy: by paradise they understand an earthly place; that to which Enoch was carried. But it cannot be so—for it is of the faith that Christ, shortly after His death went down *in infernum*—that is, the limbus of the Fathers, but He did not go into any earthly paradise. It is, moreover, uncertain whether, after the Deluge, there be any earthly paradise remaining. But grant that there be such, it is the happy and joyful habitation, not of souls, but of bodies only. Hence it is plain from this passage, against the Greeks, Calvin, and the other innovators, that the souls of the saints, when thoroughly purged from sin, do not sleep till the day of judgment, but there behold God, and are beatified by a vision of Him.

Moraliter. Observe here the liberality of Christ, who exceeds our prayers and vows. The thief only prayed Christ to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Christ at the same time promised him a kingdom, that he might reign in it as a king. “This day,” says Eusebius of Emissa, in his “Homily on the Blessed Thief”—“as if He would say, O my faithful companion and one only witness of so great a triumph, dost thou think that I need to be so earnestly entreated to remember thee? this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” And again, “Christ when placed in the yoke

the might of Jesus!" he says, "the thief is now a prophet and preaches from the cross!" He calls him "a robber and seizer of paradise." "Thou sawest," He says, "how he did not forget his former craft, even on the cross, but, by his confession, stole the kindom." So Sedulius (*Carm. v. on Pasch*):

"Abstulit ipse suis cœlorum regna rapinis,"
"And he the heavenly kingdom took by force."

S. Cyril (*lib. ii. de Adoratione*) and S. P. Damianus (Serm. on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross) calls him the first-fruit of the cross and of believers. Christ is thus pointed out by Drogo: "Thou wert Peter on the cross, and Peter in the house of Caiaphas was the thief," because he denied Christ, whom the thief on the cross confessed before the people. He is called by S. Cyprian, or whoever is the author of the *Sermon de Passione*, "The colleague of the martyrdom of Christ." By Arnold, abbot of Bona Vallis, (*tract de verb. Christ*): "The comrade" (collateralis) "of Christ, and the forerunner of His victory." By S. Chrysostom (Homily on the Man Born Blind): "The advocate of Christ, because he defended Him against the Jews, like an advocate." By Anastasius the Sinaite (*lib. v. Hexam.*), "The bird of heaven, the great eagle, flying through the air to paradise." S. Athanasius classes together many eulogies in his aforesaid piece on Parasc:—Among other things he says, "O thief, fellow soldier of Christ, accuser of the Jews. O thief, merchant of the kingdom, keeper of paradise. O thief, the garland, as it were, of the cross, making a heaven for thyself. O thief, teaching men how to carry off a kingdom as if by theft. O thief, the last to come, the first to be crowned. O thief, mighty accuser of the Jews. O thief, colleague (symmista) of the Apostles, purchaser of Christ!" Hear S. Paulinus in his Panegyric of the youth Celsus:

Mœror abi! discede pavor! fuge culpa, ruit mors.
Vita resurrexit, Christus in astra vocat.
Morte mea functus, mihi mortuus, et mihi victor,
Ut mors peccati, sit mihi Vita Dei.
Denique, servatum jam de cruce, duxit aperto
Limite, Latronem, qua Paradisus adest.

1. O grief depart: depart, O
fear: Flee guilt, for death
ends all.
Life, life has risen; from out
the stars I hear my Master
call.
2. Death's debt is paid! I'm
dead to self, O'er self I vic-
tory win;
Be thou the life of God to
me, Who art the death of
sin.
3. Sav'd by the cross, the
contrite thief; He led unto
the door—
The open door of
paradise,
Open for evermore.

But it is wonderful that these Fathers did not see that this assertion was at variance with the Gospel, because, except the darkness, the other signs happened after the death of Christ, as is clear from the gospel of S. Luke, whilst it is plain from the same gospel that the thief was converted whilst Christ was alive; for the cessation of the sun's light, and the darkness are related by S. Luke after the conversion of the thief. S. Cyril teaches the same as S. Leo (*Cat. Lect. xiii.*) saying, "What virtue illuminated thee, O thief? Who taught thee to love contempt, and that, when thou wast affixed to the cross? O light undying, lighting the darkness!" S. Augustine follows out at length the same idea (*Serm. xiii. de Temp.*); S. Chrysostom (*Hom. de Latrone*, and *Serm. 1 de Cruce et Latrone*). Suarez also; who adds that it was possible that the thief, before he was imprisoned, may have heard Christ preach, or have seen His miracles, or heard of them, and, perhaps, have believed in Him. S. Vincentius, in his Sermon on the Good Thief, says, that he was converted by the shadow of Christ, when the sun in its decline, and the shadow of the cross, touched him. So the shadow of S. Peter healed the sick. Acts iii. Others add that the virgin stood in the midst, between the thief and Christ, and obtained this grace for him, and that Christ showed Himself to him when he was dying, his truly crucified, as they who are crucified are shown to the people. Add, that he saw the heavens and the earth darkened, and the day changed into night, because of the Cross and death of its Creator.

The extraordinary holiness of this thief appears from his great faith, hope, and love. Faith by which he believed in Christ as the king of kings, though he saw him as the vilest, of men, nay as a crucified thief. Hope, by which he sought from Christ to be admitted into His kingdom. Love, by which he rebuked the blasphemy of his companion. He openly confessed, and defended the innocence of Christ against the Jews and His most bitter enemies, when all the others, even the Apostles themselves, fled for fear and deserted Him. His confession, therefore, was heroic. S. Greg. (*xviii. Moral. chap. 13*): "On the cross, the nails fastened his hands and feet, and nothing of him remained free from punishment, but his heart and tongue. God inspired him to offer the whole to Him, of that which he found free in himself, to believe with his heart to righteousness, and to confess with his lips to salvation. In the hearts of the faithful there are, as the Apostle testifies, three chief virtues, faith, hope, and charity, all of which the thief, filled with sudden grace, both received and preserved on the cross."

S. Augustine (*Serm. de Feria 3, Of the Pasch*; and Book 1 On the Soul and its Origin, chap. 9): "To this faith I know not what can be added. If they trembled who saw Christ raise the dead, he believed who saw Him hanging with himself on the cross. Assuredly Christ found not so great faith in Israel, nay, in the whole world." "Before he asked any thing for himself, he laboured to benefit his companion. This was a mark of singular charity." S. Chrysostom. Some in fact call this thief a martyr, like S. Cyprian in his letter

to Fabian, and assert him to have been baptized in His own blood. He repeats the same in his *Serms. de Cœna* and *de Passione*—where he says, “The thief by his confession on the cross, not only merited indulgence, but was made the companion of Christ, and was sent before Him to Paradise, and made a sharer of His kingdom by confession, and a partner of martyrdom.” S. Augustine refers to these words of S. Cyprian, Lib. i. On the Soul and its Origin, and Lib. iv. On Baptism, chap. 22, where he says, “The thief had no need of baptism or martyrdom, but was saved by his contrition alone.” He had said before “that although the thief did not die for Christ, yet his death was of equal avail with God (because he confessed the Lord crucified) as if he had been crucified for Him, and so the measure of martyrdom was found in him who believed in Christ when they who were to be martyrs fell away.”

S. Augustine again (*serm. 120 De Tempore*): “The thief was not yet called, but was already an elect—he was not yet of the household, but he was a friend—not a disciple, but a master—and, from a thief, a confessor; for although punishment had commenced in the thief it was perfected in the martyr.” *De anima et ejus orig. cap. 9*: “The robber ranked as highly for his confession of his crucified Lord as if he had been martyred for Him.” S. Jerome (Ep. 13 to Paulinus). “The thief changed the cross for paradise, and made the punishment of his murder, martyrdom.” Drogo, Bishop of Ostia (*Tract. de Sac. Dom. Pass. tom. ii. Bibliothica SS. Patrum*), calls him “martyr.” Some assert as a probable reason of his martyrdom, that the Jews hearing his confession of Christ, by which he condemned their deeds and their judgment on Christ, were so stirred up by anger against him as to break his legs, as the Gospel relates, and to make his death more speedy and painful, and in the end to make him a martyr. And S. Hilary (*lib. ii. de Trin.*) calls him a martyr. “He promised to His martyr paradise—His martyr, that is, His witness, because the thief on the cross bore testimony to his own faith and hope in Christ, or he would not have been properly and precisely a martyr, because he suffered for his own sins, and not for Christ: unless, as I have already suggested, we say that the Jews aggravated and accelerated his death, because of his confession.”

Lastly, the Abbot Arnaldes or Renald (*Tract 29 on the Seven words of Christ on the Cross, in the Bibliotheca SS. Patrum*), asserts that the thief was carried up into the heavens, and possessed a seat above all angels and above all cherubim and seraphim, even the throne of Lucifer himself. See Stephen Binettus’ Book on the Good Thief, where he calls him “The Archangel of Paradise, the first-born son of the crucified Christ, the martyr, the apostle and preacher of the whole world, who, from his chair of the cross, preached Christ to the whole world.” “Paul,” he said, preached like the cherubim, the thief loved as the seraphim.” Hear now the praises of the fathers of him.

S. Chrysostom (*Homily on the Cross and the Thief*): “The thief purchased salvation from the tree. This thief stole the heavenly empire, he used compulsion to Majesty.” And below, “We find no one before the thief to have merited the promise of paradise, not Abraham, not Isaac, not Jacob, not Moses, not the Prophets or Apostles, but before all we find the thief.” He then compares the faith of the thief to that of Abraham, Isaac, Ezekiel, Moses, and this because he believed in Him, not in

the temple, nor on His throne, nor in His glory, but as He was on the cross and in torments. “He sees Him,” he says, “in torments and adores Him as if He were in glory. He sees Him on the cross and prays to Him as if He were sitting in heaven. He sees Him and he calls upon Him, hailing Him as King of kings, saying, ‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.’ Thou seest one crucified and thou callest Him a King, thou seest Him hanging on a tree and thou thinkest of the kingdoms of the heavens. O wonderful conversion of a thief!”

S. Ambrose (*serm. 45*). “It is the more to his grace and praise that he believed in Christ on the cross; and the suffering which was a scandal to others, availed to him for faith. Rightly then did he purchase paradise who thought the cross of Christ not an offence but a virtue.” And *serm. 50*: “Let him see His gaping wounds, let him look at His blood gushing out—he still believes Him to be God whom he knew not to be a criminal, he confesses Him to be righteous whom he knew not as a sinner.” And shortly after, “He understood that for the sins of others Christ bore these wounds. He knew that those wounds on the body of Christ were not the wounds of Christ, but of the thief, and he therefore began to love Him more when, on the Body of Christ, he had recognised his own wounds.” Again, “Great and wonderful, indeed, is that faith which believed that Christ crucified was glorified rather than punished. For in this was the form of his whole salvation. He then recognised the Lord of Majesty, when he saw Him crucified with the patience of humility. He went before in devotion, who went before also in reward. For the thief came into paradise before the Apostles.”

Eusebius of Emissa (or whoever was the author, for the style shows that he was a Latin, not a Greek or Syrian like Eusebius) in his Homily “De Latrone beato:” “How singular and how stupendous that devotion. The criminal believed at the very moment when the elect denied. It was more praiseworthy and more admirable in the thief to believe in the Lord when in bonds, and falling under the last punishments, than if he had done so when He was doing mighty works. Not therefore without reason did he merit such a reward.” He adds the cause. “The heart of the thief, I think, who was now a believer in Christ, was illuminated more properly by the Godhead in a bodily form, which had infused itself more widely at that moment of the consummation of the redemption.” And again, “He did not say, ‘If Thou art God deliver me from this present suffering,’ but his ‘because Thou art God deliver me from the judgment to come,’ shows to the world its judge and the, King of ages. Although punishment began in the thief, it was perfected in a new manner in the martyr.”

This penitent thief, again, is termed by S. Athanasius an evangelist. “O Thou excellent one! Thou wast crucified as a thief, thou comest forth suddenly as an evangelist.” He is called by S. Chrysostom in his Sermon on Parasc., “a prophet,” that is a preacher and enunciator of the greatness of Christ. “O