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## SERMON

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### ON CHRIST'S TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert that he should be tempted of the devil.”—Matt. iv. 1.

**T**HE causes moving me to entreat this place of Scripture is, that such as by the inscrutable providence of God do fall into diverse temptations, judge not themselves, by reason thereof, less acceptable in God's presence; but contrariwise, having the way prepared to victory by Christ Jesus, shall not fear above measure the crafty assaults of that subtle serpent, Satan; but with joy and bold courage, having such a guide as here is painted forth, such a champion, and such weapons as here are to be found (if with obedience we will hear, and with unfeigned faith believe,) may assure ourselves of God's present favour, and of final victory, by the means of Him who, for our safeguard and deliverance, hath entered into the battle, and triumphed over his adversary, and all his raging fury.

And that the subsequents heard and understood, may the better be kept in memory, this order by God's grace we purpose to observe, in treating this matter:—

1. What this word Temptation meaneth, and how it is used within the Scriptures.
2. Who is here tempted, and at what time this temptation happened.
3. How, and by what means he was tempted.
4. And Last, Why he should suffer these temptations, and what fruit ensueth to us of the same.

Temptation, or to tempt, in the Scriptures of God is called to try, to prove, or to assault the valour, the power, the will, the pleasure, or the wisdom, whether it be of God or of creatures. And it is taken sometimes in good part, as when it is said, that “God tempted Abraham,” “God tempted the people of Israel;” that is, God did try and examine, not for his own knowledge, to whom nothing is hid, but for the certification of others, how obedient Abraham was to God's commandment, and how weak and infirm the Israelites were, in their journey towards the promised land. And this temptation is always good, because it proceedeth immediately from God, to open and make manifest the secret motions of men's hearts, the power of God's word, and the great lenity and gentleness of God towards the infirmities, the horrible sins, and rebellions of those whom he hath received into his regiment and care. For who would have believed, that the bare word of God could so have moved the heart and affections of Abraham, that to obey

God's commandment, he determined to kill with his own hand, his best beloved son Isaac? Who could have trusted, that under so many torments as Job did suffer, he should not speak, in all his great temptations, one foolish word against God? Or who could have thought, that God so mercifully should have pardoned so many and so manifest transgressions committed by his people in the desert; and yet, that his mercy did never utterly leave them, but still continued with them, till at length, he did perform his promise made to Abraham? To whom, I say, could these things have been persuaded, unless, by trial and temptation taken of his creatures by God, they had come by revelation made in his holy Scriptures to our knowledge?

And so, this kind of temptation is profitable, good, and necessary, as a thing proceeding from God, who is fountain of all goodness, to the manifestation of his own glory, and to the profit of the sufferer, however the flesh judge in the hour of temptation. Otherwise, temptation, or to tempt, is taken in evil part, that is, he that does assault or assails, intendeth destruction and confusion to him that is assaulted; as when Satan tempted the woman in the garden, Job by diverse tribulations, and David by adultery. The Scribes and Pharisees tempted Christ, by diverse means, questions, and subtleties. And of this manner, saith St. James, "God tempteth no man;" that is, by temptation proceeding immediately from him, He intendeth no man's destruction.

And here ye shall note, that albeit Satan appear sometimes to prevail against God's elect, yet is he ever frustrated of his final purpose. By temptation, he led the woman and David from the obedience of God; but he could not retain them for ever under his thralldom. Power was granted to him, to spoil Job of his substance and children, and to strike his body with a plague of sickness most vile and fearful: but he could not compel his mouth to blaspheme God's majesty. And therefore, albeit we be laid open sometimes, as it were, even to the mouth a Satan, let us not think therefore that God hath abjected us, and that he taketh no care over us. No; He permitteth Satan to rage, and as it were, to triumph for a time, that when he hath poured forth the venom of his malice against God's elect, it may return to his own confusion; and that the deliverance of God's children may be more to his glory, and comfort of the afflicted, knowing that his hand is so powerful, his mercy and good-will so prompt, that he delivereth his little ones from their cruel enemy, even as David did his sheep and lamb from the mouth of the lion. For a benefit received in extreme danger, doth more move us, than the preservation from ten thousand perils, that we fall not in them: and yet, to preserve from dangers and perils, that we fall not in them whether they be of body or spirit, is no less the work of God, than to deliver from them: but the weakness of our faith doth not espy that. But this I omit to better time.

Last, to tempt, betokeneth simply, to prove or try, without any determinate purpose of profit or damage to ensue; as when the mind doubteth of

any thing, and therein desireth to be satisfied, without great love or extreme hatred of the thing that is tempted or tried. As the Queen of Sheba came to tempt Solomon in subtle questions; David tempted, that is, tried himself, if he could go in harness; and Gideon saith, "Let not thy anger kindle against me, if I tempt thee yet once again." This famous queen, not fully trusting the bruit and fame that was spread of Solomon, by subtle questions desired to prove his wisdom, at the first neither extremely hating, nor fervently loving the person of the king. And David, as a man not accustomed to harness, would try, how he was able to go, and behave, and fashion himself therein, before that so enarmed, he would hazard battle with Goliah. And Gideon, not satisfied in his conscience by the first sign that he received, desired, without contempt or hatred of God, the second time to be certified of his vocation. And in this sense must the apostle be expounded, when he commandeth us to tempt, that is, to try and examine ourselves, if we stand in faith. And this much for the term.

Now, to the person tempted, and to the time and place of his temptation. The person tempted, is the only well-beloved Son of God. The time, was immediately after his baptism; and the place, was the desert or wilderness.

But that we may make our fruit of the premises, we must consider the same more profoundly. That the Son of God was thus tempted, giveth to us instruction, that temptations, although they be never so grievous and fearful, do not separate us from God's favour and mercies; but rather, declare the great graces of God to pertain to us, which maketh Satan to rage as a roaring lion: for against none doth he so fiercely fight, as against those, in whose hearts Christ hath taken possession. The time of Christ's temptation is here most diligently to be noted. Then, that is (as Mark and Luke do witness) immediately after the voice of God the Father had commended his Son to the world, and had visibly appointed him, by the sign of the Holy Ghost. He was led or moved to go, by the Spirit, to a wilderness, where forty days he remained fasting among the wild beasts. This Spirit which led Christ into the desert, was not the devil, but the Holy Spirit of God the Father, by whom Christ, as touching his human and manly nature, was conducted and led, likewise as by the same Spirit he was strengthened and made strong, and finally, raised up from the dead. The Spirit of God, I say, led Christ to the place of his battle, where long time he endured the combat; for the whole forty days and nights, as Luke saith, he was tempted: but in the end most vehemently, after his continual fasting, and that he began to be hungry.

Upon these forty days, and this fasting of Christ, do our Papists found and build their Lent: for, say they, All the actions of Christ are our instructions; what he did we ought to follow; but he fasted forty days, therefore, we ought to do the like. I answer, If that we ought to follow all Christ's actions, then ought we neither to eat nor drink the space of forty days, for so fasted

Christ: we ought to go upon the waters with our feet, to cast out devils by our word, to heal and cure all sorts of maladies, to call again the dead to life; for so did Christ. This I write, only that men may see the vanity of these men, who boasting themselves of wisdom, are become mad fools. Did Christ fast these forty days, to teach us a superstitious fasting? Can the Papists assure me, or any other man, which were the forty days that Christ fasted? Plain it is, he fasted the forty days and nights that immediately did follow his baptism; but which they were, or in what month was the day of his baptism, the Scripture does not express. And albeit the day were expressed, am I, or any Christian, bound to counterfeit Christ's actions, as the ape counterfeiteth the act or work of man? He himself requireth no such obedience of his true followers, but saith to his apostles, "Go and preach the Evangel to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Command them to observe and keep all that I have commanded you." Here, Christ Jesus requireth the observation of his precepts and commandments, and not of his actions, except in so far as he hath also commanded them. And so must the apostle be understood, when he saith, "Be followers of Christ, for Christ hath suffered for us, that we should follow his footsteps"—which can not be understood of every action of Christ, neither in the mystery of our redemption, neither in his actions and marvellous works, but only of those which he hath commanded us to observe.

But when the Papists are so diligent in establishing their dreams and fantasies, they lose the profit which here is to be gathered; that is, Why Christ did fast those forty days—which were a doctrine more necessary for Christians, than to corrupt the simple hearts with superstition, as though the Wisdom of God, Christ Jesus, had taught us no other mystery by his fasting, than the abstinence from flesh, or once on the day to eat flesh, the space of forty days. God hath taken a just vengeance upon the pride of such men, while he thus confoundeth the wisdom of those that do most glory in wisdom; and doth strike with blindness, such as will be guides and lanterns to the feet of others, and yet, refuse themselves to hear or follow the light of God's word. From such, deliver thy poor flock, O Lord!

The causes of Christ's fasting these forty days, I find chiefly to be two: the former, to witness to the world, the dignity and excellency of that vocation which Christ, after his baptism, was to take upon him openly: Secondly, to declare, that he entered in battle willingly for our cause, and doth, as it were, provoke his adversary to assault him.

Albeit Christ Jesus, in the eternal counsel of his Father, was appointed to be the Prince of Peace, the Angel, that is, the Messenger of his testament, and he alone that should fight our battles for us, yet did he not enter in execution of it in the eyes of men, till that he was commended to mankind by

the voice of his heavenly Father, and as he was placed and anointed by the Holy Ghost, by a visible sign given to the eyes of men. After which time, he was led to the desert, and fasted, as before is said. And this he did, to teach us with what fear, carefulness, and reverence, ought the messengers of the word to enter in the vocation which is not only most excellent, (for who is worthy to be God's ambassador?) but also, subject to most extreme troubles and dangers. For he that is appointed pastor, watchman, or preacher, if he feed not with his whole power; if he warn and admonish not when he sees the sword come; and if in doctrine he divideth not the word righteously, the blood and souls of those that perish for lack of food, admonition, and doctrine, shall be required of his hand. If our horned and mitred bishops did understand, and firmly believe this, I think, they should be otherwise occupied than they have been this long time bypast.

But to our purpose:—That Christ exceeded not the space of forty days in his fasting, he doth it, to the imitation of Moses and Elias; of whom, the one before the receiving of the law, and the other before the communication and reasoning which he had with God in Mount Horeb, (in which he was commanded to anoint Hazael king over Syria, and Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet) fasted the same number of days. The thing that ensued and did follow the supernatural fasting of these two servants of God, Moses and Elias, did impair and diminish the tyranny and kingdom of Satan: for by the law came the knowledge of sin, the damnation of such impieties, (specially, of idolatry, and such as the devil had invented;) and finally, by the law came such a revelation of God's will, that no man could justly afterward excuse his sin, by ignorance, by which the devil before had blinded many. So that the law, albeit it might not renew and purge the heart, (for that worketh the spirit of Christ Jesus by faith only,) yet it was a bridle, that did let and stay the rage of external wickedness in many; and was a schoolmaster also, that led unto Christ. For when man can find no power in himself to do that which is commanded, and perfectly doth understand and believe, that the curse of God is pronounced against all those that abide not in every thing that is commanded in God's law to do them; the man, I say, that understandeth and knoweth his own corrupt nature, and God's severe judgment, most gladly will receive the free redemption offered by Christ Jesus, which is the only victory that over-throweth Satan and his power. And so, by the giving of the law, did God greatly weaken, impair, and make feeble the tyranny and kingdom of the devil.

In the days of Elias had the devil so prevailed, that kings and rulers made open war against God, killing his prophets, destroying his ordinances, and erecting up idolatry; which did so prevail, that the prophet complained, that of all the true fearers and worshippers of God, he was left alone, and wicked Jezebel sought his life also. After this his fasting and complaint, he was sent

by God to anoint these persons afore-named, who took such vengeance upon the wicked and obstinate idolaters, (God grant our eyes may see the like, to his glory, and comfort of his afflicted flock!) that he that escaped the sword of Hazael, fell into the hands of Jehu, and those whom Jehu left, escaped not God's vengeance under Elisha.

The remembrance of this was fearful to Satan; for at the coming of Christ Jesus, was impiety in highest degree amongst those that pretended most knowledge of God's will, and Satan was at such rest in his kingdom, that the priests, scribes, and pharisees, had taken away the key of knowledge; that is, they had so obscured and darkened God's holy Scriptures, by false glosses and vain traditions, that neither would they enter themselves into the kingdom of God, neither suffer and permit others to enter; but violently restrained, and with tyranny struck back from the right way, (that is, from Christ Jesus himself,) such as would have entered into possession of the life everlasting by him. Satan, I say, having such dominion over the chief rulers of the visible kirk, and espying in Christ such graces as before he had not seen in man, and considering him to follow in fasting the footsteps of Moses and Elias, no doubt, did greatly fear the quietness and rest of his most obedient servants, the priests and their adherents, to be troubled by Christ; and therefore, by all ingine [ability] and craft doth he assault him, to see what advantage he could have of him. And Christ did not repel him (as by the power of his Godhead he might) that he should not tempt him; but permitted him to spend all his artillery, and did receive the strokes and assaults of his temptations in his own body, to the end he might make weak and feeble the strength and tyrannous power of our adversary, by long-suffering.

For thus, methinks, our Master and Champion, Christ Jesus, did provoke our enemy to battle: Satan, thou gloriest of thy power and victory over mankind, that there is none able to withstand thy assaults, nor escape thy dart, but at one time or other thou givest him a wound. Lo, I am a man like to my brethren, having flesh and blood, and all properties of man's nature, sin, which is thy venom, excepted. Tempt, try, and assault me. I offer thee here a place most convenient,—the wilderness:—there shall be no mortal creature to comfort me against thy assaults; thou shalt have time sufficient to do what thou canst; I shall not fly the place of battle. If thou become victor, thou may still continue in possession of thy kingdom in this wretched world: but if thou canst not prevail against me, then must thy prey and unjust spoil be taken from thee; thou must grant thyself vanquished and confounded, and must be compelled to leave off from all accusation of the members of my body; for to them doth appertain the fruit of my battle; my victory is their's, as I am appointed to take the punishment of their sins in my body. Oh, dear sisters! what comfort ought the remembrance of these things be to our hearts! Christ Jesus hath fought our battle; he himself hath taken us in his

care and protection. Howsoever the devil rage by temptations, be they spiritual or corporal, he is not able to bereave us out of the hand of the potent Son of God. To Him be all glory, for his mercies most abundantly poured forth upon us!

There resteth yet to be spoken of, the Time when our Head was tempted; which began immediately after his baptism: whereupon we have to note and mark, that albeit the malice of Satan doth never cease, but always seeketh the means to trouble the godly, yet sometimes he rageth more fiercely than at others; and that is, commonly, when God beginneth to manifest his love and favour to any of his children; and at the end of their battle, when they are nearest to obtain final victory. The devil, no doubt, did at all times envy the humble spirit which was in Abel; but he did not stir up the carnal heart of Cain against him, till God did declare his favour towards him, by acceptance of his sacrifice. The same we find in Jacob, Joseph, David, and most evidently in Christ Jesus. How raged Satan at the tidings of Christ's nativity! What blood caused he to be shed, of purpose to have murdered Christ in his infancy, the evangelist Saint Matthew doth witness; that in all the coasts and borders of Bethlehem, were the children of two years old, and of his age, murdered without mercy—a fearful spectacle, and horrible example of insolent and unaccustomed tyranny! And what is the cause moving Satan thus to rage against innocents, considering, that by reason of their imperfections, they could not hurt his kingdom at that instant? Oh, the crafty eye of Satan looked farther than to the present time! He heard bruited by the three wise men, that they had learned by the appearance of a star, that the King of the Jews was born; and he was not ignorant, that the time prophesied of Christ's coming, was then instant: for a stranger was clad with the crown and sceptre, in the kingdom of Judah; the angel had declared the glad tidings to the pastors, that a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David. All these tidings inflamed the wrath and malice of Satan; for he perfectly understood, that the coming of the promised Seed was appointed to his confusion, and to the breaking down of his head and tyranny. And therefore he raged most cruelly, even at the first hearing of Christ's birth, thinking, that albeit he could not let nor withstand his coming, yet should he shorten his days upon earth, lest by long life, and peaceable quietness in it, the number of good men, by Christ's doctrine and virtuous life should be multiplied. And so, he intended, before that ever he can open his mouth in his Father's message, to cut him off amongst the other children. Oh cruel Serpent! in vain dost thou spend thy venom; for the days of God's elect thou canst not shorten, and when the wheat-corn is fallen in the ground, then doth it most multiply.

But of these precedents, mark, dear sisters, what hath been the practice of the devil from the beginning; most cruelly to rage against God's children,



when God beginneth to show them his mercy. And therefore, marvel not, dearly beloved, albeit the like come unto you. If Satan fume and roar against you, whether it be against your bodies by persecution, or inward in your conscience by a spiritual battle, be not discouraged, as though ye were less acceptable in God's presence, or as that Satan might at any time prevail against you. No: your temptations and storms that do arise so suddenly, argue and witness, that the seed that is sown, is fallen in good ground, beginneth to take root, and shall by God's grace bring forth fruit abundantly, in due season and convenient time. And that is it which Satan doth fear; and therefore thus he rageth, and shall rage against you, thinking, that if he can repulse you now suddenly in the beginning, that then ye shall be at all times an easy prey, never able to resist his assaults. But as my hope is good, so shall my prayer be, that so ye may be strengthened, that the world, and Satan himself may understand and perceive, that God lighteth your battle. For ye remember, sisters, that being present with you, and entreating the same place, I admonished you, that Satan could not long sleep, when his kingdom was oppugned [opposed]; and therefore, I willed you, if that ye were in mind to continue with Christ, to prepare yourselves for the day of temptation. The person of the speaker is wretched, miserable, and nothing to be regarded; but the things that were spoken, are the infallible and eternal truth of God, without observation of the which, never can, nor shall come, life to mankind. God grant your continuance to the end.

This much have I briefly spoken of the temptation of Christ Jesus; who was tempted; and of the time and place of his temptation. Now resteth to be spoken, How he was tempted, and by what means.

The most part of expositors do think, that all this temptation was in spirit and imagination only, the corporal senses being nothing moved. I will contend with no man in such cases, but patiently will I suffer every man to abound in his own knowledge; and without prejudice of any man's estimation, I offer my judgment to be weighed and considered by christian charity. It appeareth to me by the plain text, that Christ suffered this temptation in body and spirit: that likewise, as the hunger which Christ did suffer, and the desert in which he remained, were not things presented to the imagination, but that the body did verily remain in the wilderness among beasts, and after forty days did hunger and faint, for lack of food; so, the external ear shall hear the tempting words of Satan, which did enter into the knowledge of the soul; which repelling the venom of such temptations, caused the tongue to speak, and confute Satan, to our unspeakable comfort and consolation. It appeareth also, that the body of Christ Jesus was carried by Satan from the wilderness, unto the temple of Jerusalem, and that it was placed upon the pinnacle of the same temple; from whence it was carried to a high mountain, and there tempted. If any man can show the contrary hereof by the plain

scriptures of God, with all submission and thanksgiving I will prefer his judgment to my own. But if the matter stand only in probability, and opinion of men, then is it lawful for me to believe as the Scripture here speaketh: that is, that Satan spake, and Christ answered; and Satan took him, and carried him from one place to another. Besides the evidence of the text affirming these precedents, that Satan was permitted to carry the body of Christ from place to place, and yet was not permitted to execute any further tyranny against it, is most singular comfort to such as be afflicted, or troubled in body or spirit. The weak and feeble conscience of man, under such temptations, doth commonly gather and collect a false consequent. For thus doth man reason: The body or the spirit is vexed by assaults and temptations of Satan, and he doth carry or molest it; therefore God is angry with it, and taketh no care over it. I answer, tribulations and grievous vexations of body or of mind are not ever signs of God's displeasure against the sufferer; neither yet doth it follow, that God hath cast away the care of his creatures, because he permits them to be molested and vexed for a time. For if any sort of tribulation were the infallible sign of God's displeasure, then should we condemn the best beloved children of God. But of this matter we may perhaps speak after this more amply.

Now to the temptation. Verse 2nd, *"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungered."* Verse 3rd, *"Then came to him the Tempter, and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,"* etc.

Why Christ fasted forty days, and would not exceed the same (without sense and feeling of hunger,) is partly before touched. That is, he would provoke the devil to battle, by the wilderness and long abstinence; but he would not usurp nor arrogate more to himself; in that case, than God had wrought with others his servants and messengers before. Not but that Christ Jesus (as St. Augustine doth more amply declare,) without feeling of hunger, might have endured the whole year, yea, time without end, as well as he did endure the space of forty days; for the nature of the manhood was sustained these forty days, by the invisible power of God, which is at all times of equal power. But Christ willing to offer further occasion to Satan to proceed in tempting of him, permitted the human nature to crave earnestly that which it lacked, that is to say, refreshing of meat; which being perceived, Satan taketh occasion, as aforesaid, to tempt and assault. Some judge, that Satan tempted Christ to gluttony: but this appeareth little to agree with the purpose of the Holy Ghost, who showeth us this history, to let us understand, that Satan never ceaseth to oppugn the children of God; but continually, by one mean or other, driveth and provoketh them to some wicked opinions of their God: And to have them desire stones to have been converted into bread, or to have desired the hunger to have been satisfied, hath never

been sin, neither yet, wicked opinion of God.

And therefore, I doubt not but the temptation was more spiritual, more subtle, and more dangerous. Satan hath respect to the voice of God, which hath pronounced Christ to be his well-beloved Son, etc.

Against this voice he fights, as his nature is ever to do, against the assured and immutable word of God. For such is his malice against God, and against his chosen children, that where and to whom God pronounces love and mercy, to these threatens he displeasure and damnation; and where God threatens death, there is he bold to pronounce life. And for this cause, is Satan called, a "Liar from the beginning." And so, the purpose of Satan is to drive Christ into desperation, that he shall not believe the former voice of God his Father.

And so, this appeareth to be the meaning of his temptation: Thou hast heard (would Satan say,) a voice proclaimed in the air, that thou wast the beloved Son of God, in whom his soul was well pleased. But may you not be judged more nor mad, and fonder than the brainless fool, if you do believe any such promise? Where are the signs of his love? Art thou not abject from comfort of all creature? Thou art in worse case than the brute beasts: for every day they hunt for their prey, and the earth produceth grass and herbs for their sustentation, so that none of them are pined and consumed away by hunger. But thou hast fasted forty days and nights, ever waiting upon some relief and comfort from above; but thy best provision is hard stones. If thou dost glory in thy God, and dost verily believe the promise that is made, command that these stones be bread. But evident it is, that so thou canst not do; for if thou couldst, or if thy God would have showed thee any such pleasure, thou mightest long ago have removed thy hunger; and need not to have endured this languishing, for lack of food. But seeing thou hast long continued, and no provision is made for thee, vanity it is, longer to believe any such promise. And therefore, despair of any help from God's hand, and provide for thyself by some other means.

Many words have I used here, dearly beloved; but I cannot express the thousandth part of the malicious despite which lurked in this one temptation of Satan. It is a mocking of Christ and of his obedience; it is a plain denial of God's promise; it is the triumphing voice of him that appeareth to have gotten victory. Oh! how bitter this temptation is, no creature can understand, but such as feeleth the dolour of such darts as Satan casteth at the tender conscience of those that gladly would rest and repose in God, and in the promises of his mercy.

But here is to be noted the ground and foundation of this temptation. The conclusion of Satan is this: Thou art none of God's elect, much less, his well-beloved Son. His reason is this: Thou art in trouble, and findest no relief. Then the foundation of the temptation was Christ's poverty, and the

lack of food, without hope of remedy to be sent from God; and it is the same temptation which the devil objected to him by the princes of the priests, in his grievous torments upon the cross. For this they cry, "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we shall believe in him: he trusted in God; let Him deliver him, if he have pleasure in him." As that they would say, God is the deliverer of his servants from troubles: God never permits those that fear him, to come to confusion. This man we see in extreme trouble: if he be the Son of God, or yet, a true worshipper of his name, He will deliver him from this calamity. If He deliver him not, but suffer him to perish in these anguishes, then is it an assured sign, that God hath rejected him, as a hypocrite that shall have no portion of his glory.

Thus, I say, taketh Satan occasion to tempt, and moveth also others to judge and condemn God's elect and chosen children, by reason, that troubles are multiplied upon them. But with what weapons we ought to fight against such enemies and assaults, we shall learn, in the answer of Christ Jesus which followeth: Verse 4th, "*But he answering, said, It is written, man liveth not by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" This answer of Christ, proveth the sentence which we have brought of the afore-named temptation, to be the very meaning of the Holy Ghost: for unless the purpose of Satan had been, to have removed Christ from all hope of God's merciful providence towards him, in that his necessity, Christ had answered nothing directly to his words, saying, "Command that these stones be made bread." But Christ Jesus perceiving his art and malicious subtlety, answereth directly to his meaning, his words nothing regarded: in which answer, Satan was so confounded, that he was ashamed to reply any further in that behalf.

But that ye may thy better understand the meaning of Christ's answer, we will phrase and repeat it over in more words: Thou labourest, Satan, (will Christ say,) to bring in my heart a doubt and suspicion of my Father's promise, which was openly proclaimed in my baptism. By reason of my hunger, and that I lack all carnal provision, thou art bold to affirm, that God taketh no care over me. But thou art a deceitful, and false corrupt sophister, and thy argument is vain, and full of blasphemies; for thou bindest God's love, mercy, and providence to the having, or wanting of corporal provision, which no part of God's Scriptures do teach us; but rather they express the contrary, as it is written, "Man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God:" That is, the very life and felicity of man, consisteth not in abundance of corporal things; for the possession and having of them maketh no man blessed nor happy, neither shall the lack of them be the cause of his final misery: but the very life of man consisteth in God, and in his promises pronounced by his own mouth, unto the which, whoso cleaveth and sticketh unfeignedly, shall live the life everlasting. And alt-

though all creatures on earth forsake him, yet shall not his corporal life perish, till the time appointed by God approach; for God hath means to feed, preserve, and maintain, unknown to man's reason, and contrary to the common course of nature. He fed his people Israel in the desert, forty years, without the provision of man; he preserved Jonah in the whale's belly, and maintained and kept the bodies of the three children, in the furnace and fire. Reason and the natural man could have seen nothing in these cases, but destruction and death; and could have judged nothing, but that God had cast away the care of these his creatures. And yet, was his providence most vigilant towards them, in the extremity of their dangers, from which He did so deliver them, and in the midst of them did so assist them, that his glory, which is his mercy and goodness, did more appear and shine after their troubles, than it could have done, if they had not fallen in them. And therefore, I measure not the truth and favour of God, by having or by lacking of corporal necessities, but by the promise that he hath made to me. As He himself is immutable, so is his word and promise constant, which I believe, and to which I stick and do cleave, whatever come externally to the body.

In this answer of Christ, we may espy what weapons are to be used against our adversary, the devil, and how that we may confute his arguments, which craftily, and of malice, he maketh against God's elect. Christ might have repulsed Satan with a word, or through commanding him to silence, as he to whom all power was given in heaven and earth. But it pleased his mercy to teach us, how to use the sword of the Holy Ghost, which is, the word of God, in battle against our spiritual enemy. The scripture that Christ brought, is written in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. It was spoken by Moses, a little before his death, to establish the people in God's merciful providence: For in the same chapter, and in certain others that go before, he reckoneth the great travail and diverse dangers, with the extreme necessities that they had sustained in the desert, the space of forty years; and yet, notwithstanding, how constant God had been, in keeping and performing his promise for them: through all perils had he conducted them, to the sight and borders of the promised land.

And so, this scripture most directly answereth to the temptation of Satan. For thus doth Satan reason (as before is said:) Thou art in poverty, and hast no provision to sustain thy life; therefore God taketh no regard nor care over thee, as he doth over his chosen children. Christ Jesus answereth, Thy argument is false and vain; for poverty or necessity secludeth not the providence or care of God; which is easy to be proved by the people of God, Israel, which in the desert did oftentimes lack things necessary to sustentation of the life, and for lack of the same they grugged and murmured. Yet did never the Lord cast away the providence and care of them; but according to the voice that he had once pronounced, to wit, that they were his peculiar peo-

ple, and according to the promise made to Abraham, and to them' before the departure from Egypt, he still remained; their conductor and guide, till he placed them in peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, their great infirmities and manifold transgressions notwithstanding.

Thus are we taught, I say, by Christ Jesus, to repulse Satan and his assaults by the word of God, and to apply the examples of his mercies which he hath showed to others before us, to our own souls, in the hour of temptation and in the time of our troubles; for what God doth to one at any time, the same appertaineth to all that hang and depend upon God and his promises. And therefore, howsoever we be assaulted by Satan, our adversary, within the word of God is armour and weapons sufficient.

The chief craft of Satan is, to trouble those that begin to decline from his obedience, and to declare themselves enemies to iniquity, with diverse assaults; the end whereof is always one, that is, to put variance betwixt them and God into their conscience, that they should not repose and rest themselves in his assured promises. And to persuade this, he useth and inventeth diverse arguments. Sometimes he calleth the sins of their youth, and which they have committed in the time of blindness, to their remembrance: very oft, he objecteth their unthankfulness towards God, and present imperfections, by sickness, poverty, tribulations in their household, or by persecution. He can allege, that God is angry, and regards not; or by the spiritual cross, which few feel, and fewer do understand the utility and profit of it, he would drive God's children to desperation: and by infinite means more, goeth he about, seeking, like a roaring lion, to undermine and destroy our faith. But impossible it is for him to prevail against us, unless that obstinately we do refuse to use the defence and weapon that God hath offered; yea, I say, that God's elect cannot refuse it, but seek for their defender, when the battle is most strong: for the sobs, groanings, and lamentations of such as fight; yea, the fear they have to be vanquished, the calling and praying they make for continuance, are the undoubted and right seeking of Christ, our champion. We refuse not the weapon, although sometimes by infirmity, we cannot use it as we would. It sufficeth, that the heart unfeignedly sob for greater strength, for continuance, and for final deliverance by Christ Jesus. That which lacketh in us, his sufficiency doth supply, for it is He that fighteth and overcometh for us.

But for bringing of the examples of the Scriptures, if God permit, in the end we shall speak more largely, when it shall be entreated, why Christ permitted himself thus to be tempted. Sundry impediments now do call me from writing in this matter; but by God's grace, at convenient leisure, I purpose to finish, and to send unto you. I grant the matter that proceedeth from me, is not worthy your labours and pains to read it; yet seeing it is a testimony of my good mind towards you, I doubt not, but you will accept it in

good part.

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant unto you, to find favour and mercy in the presence of that Judge, whose eyes and knowledge do pierce through the secret cogitations of all hearts, in the day of temptation which shall apprehend all flesh, according to that mercy which you, illuminated and directed by his Holy Spirit, have shown unto the afflicted. The God of all comfort and consolation confirm and strengthen you in his virtue, unto the end. Amen.