

# THE FIRST TEMPATION OF CHRIST

by John Knox

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*Knox's exposition of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, explaining the meaning of temptation in Scripture and asserting that Jesus's trials were real tests meant to provide believers with a model of victory over Satan. He comforts Christians facing their own temptations by pointing to Christ as their champion.*

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1. The First Temptation of Christ

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The First Temptation of Christ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.—Matthew 4:1. The cause moving me to treat of this place of Scripture is, that such as by the inscrutable providence of God fall into divers temptations, judge not themselves by reason thereof to be less acceptable in God's presence. But, on the contrary, having the way prepared to victory by Jesus Christ, they 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 pointed forth, such a champion, and such weapons as here are to be found (if with obedience we will hear, and unfeigned faith believe), we may assure ourselves of God's present favor, and of final victory, by the means of Him, who, for our safeguard and deliverance, entered in the battle, and triumphed over His adversary, and all his raging fury. And that this being heard and understood, may the better be kept in memory; this order, by God's grace, we propose to observe, in treating the matter: First, What this word temptation meaneth, and how it is used within the Scriptures. Secondly, Who is here tempted and at what time this temptation happened. Thirdly, How and by what means He was tempted. Fourthly, Why He should suffer these temptations, and what fruits ensue to us from the same.

First, Temptation, or to tempt, in the Scriptures of God, is called to try, to prove, or to assault the valor, 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 them, not for His own knowledge, to whom nothing is hid, but to certify others how obedient Abraham was to God's commandment, and how weak and inferior Israelites were in their journey toward the promised land. And this temptation is always good, because it proceeds immediately from God, to open and make manifest the secret motions of men's hearts, the puissance and power of God's word, and the great lenity and gentleness of God toward the iniquities (yea, horrible sins and rebellions) of those whom He hath received into His regimen and care. For who could 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, so many torments as Job suffered, he should not speak in all his great temptation 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 never utterly left them, but still continued with them, till at length he performed His promise made to Abraham?, Who, I say, would have been persuaded of these things, unless by trials and temptations 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 the fountain of all goodness, to the manifestation of His own glory, and to the profit of the suffered, however the flesh may judge in the hour of temptation. Otherwise temptation, or to tempt, is taken in evil part; that is, he that assaults or assails intends destruction and confusion to him that is assaulted. As when Satan tempted the women in the

garden, Job by divers tribulations, and David by adultery. The scribes and Pharisees tempted Christ by divers means, questions, and subtleties. And of this matter, saith St. James, "God tempteth no man"; that is, by temptation proceeding immediately from Him He intends no man's destruction. And here you shall note, that although Satan appears sometimes to prevail against God's elect, yet he is ever frustrated of his final purpose. By temptation He led Eve and David from the obedience of God, but He could not retain them forever under His thralldom. Power was granted to Him to spoil Job of his substance and children, and to strike his body with a plague and sickness most vile and fearful, but He could not compel his mouth to blaspheme God's majesty; and, therefore, although we are laid open sometimes, as it were, to tribulation for a time, it is that when He has 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 the comfort of the afflicted: knowing that His hand is so powerful, His mercy and good-will so prompt, that He delivers His little ones from their cruel enemy, even as David did his sheep and lambs from the mouth of the lion. For a little benefit received in extreme danger more moves us than the preservation from ten thousand perils, so that we fall not into them. And yet to preserve from dangers and perils so that we fall not into them, whether they are of body or spirit, is no less the work of God than to deliver from them; but the weakness of our faith does not perceive it: this I leave at the present. Also, to tempt means simply to prove or try without any determinate purpose or profit or damage to ensue; as when the mind doubteth of anything, and therein desires to be satisfied, without great love or extreme hatred of the thing that is tempted or tried. David tempted; that is, tried himself if he could go in harness. (1 Sam. xvii.) And Gideon said, "Let not thine anger kindle against me, if I tempt thee once again." So the Queen of Sheba came to tempt Solomon in subtle questions. This famous queen, not fully trusting the report 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 he would hazard battle with Goliath so armed. And Gideon, not satisfied in his conscience by the first that he received, desired, without contempt or hatred of God, a second time to be certified of his vocation. In this sense must the apostle be expounded when he commands us to tempt; that is, to try and examine ourselves, if we stand in the faith. Thus 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 derive advantage from what is related, we must consider the same more profoundly. That the Son of God was thus tempted gives instructions to us, that temptations, although they be ever so grievous and fearful, do not separate us from God's favor and mercy, but rather declare the great graces of God to appertain to us, which makes Satan to rage as a roaring lion; for against none does He so fiercely fight as against those of whose hearts Christ has taken possession. The time of Christ's temptation is here most diligently to be noted. And that was, as Mark and Luke witness, immediately after the voice of God the Father had commended His Son to the world, and had visibly pointed to Him by the sign of the Holy Ghost; He was led or moved by the Spirit to go to a wilderness, where forty days he remained fasting among the wild beasts. This Spirit which led Christ into the wilderness 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 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 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 this 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, that if we ought to follow all Christ's actions, then ought we neither to eat nor drink for 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 those who, boasting themselves of wisdom, have become fools. Did Christ fast those forty days to teach us 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 followed His baptism, but which they were, or in what month was the day of His baptism, Scripture does not express; and although the day were exprest, am I or any Christian bound to counterfeit Christ's actions as the ape counterfeits the act or work of man? He Himself requires no such obedience of His true followers, but saith to the apostles, "Go and preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; commanding them to observe and keep all that I have commanded you." Here Christ Jesus requires the observance of His precepts and commandments, not of His actions, except in so far as He had 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, either in the mystery of our redemption, or in His actions and marvelous works, but only of those which He hath commanded us to observe. But where the Papists are so diligent in establishing their dreams and fantasies, they lose the profit that here is to be gathered; that is, why Christ fasted 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, for the space of forty days. God hath taken a just vengeance upon the pride of such men, while He thus confounds the wisdom of those that do most glory in wisdom, and strikes 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 uses of Christ's fasting these forty days I find chiefly to be two: The first, to witness to the world the dignity and excellence of His vocation, which Christ, after His baptism, was to take upon Him openly; the other, to declare that he entered into battle willingly for our cause, and does, as it were, provoke his adversary to assault Him: although 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 could fight our battles for us, yet He did not enter in execution of it, in the sight of men, till 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 the messengers of the Word ought to enter on their 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 snare come, and if, in doctrine, he divide 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. But to our purpose; that Christ exceeded not the space of forty days in His fasting, He did 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 events that ensued and followed this supernatural fasting of these two servants of God, Moses and Elias, impaired and diminished the tyranny of the 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, although it might not renew and purge the heart, for that the Spirit of Christ Jesus worketh by faith only, yet it was a bridle that did hinder and stay the rage of external wickedness in many, and was a schoolmaster that led unto Christ. For when man can find no power in himself to do that which is commanded, and perfectly understands, and when he believes that the curse of God is pronounced against those that abide not in everything that is commanded in God's law to do them—the man, I say, that understands and knows 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 overthrows Satan and his power. And so by the giving of the law God greatly weakened, impaired, and made frail the tyranny and kingdom of the devil. In the days of Elias, the devil had so prevailed that kings and rulers made open war against God, killing His prophets, destroying His ordinances, and building up idolatry, which did so prevail that the prophet complained that of all the true fearers and worshipers 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 the persons aforementioned, who took such vengeance upon the wicked and obstinate idolaters that he who 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, impiety was in the highest degree among 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 themselves enter into the kingdom of God, nor suffer and permit others to enter; but with violence restrained, and with tyranny struck back from the right way, that is, from Christ Jesus Himself, such as would have entered into the possession of life everlasting by Him. Satan, I say, having such dominion over the chief rulers of the visible Church, 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 greatly feared that the quietness and rest of his most obedient servants, the priests, and their adherents, would be troubled by Christ. And, therefore, by all engines and craft, he assaults 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 have done, that he should not tempt Him, but permitted him to spend all his artillery, and received the strokes and assaults of Satan's temptations in His own body, to the end He might weaken and enfeeble the strength and tyrannous power of our adversary by His long suffering. For thus, methinks, our Master and Champion, Jesus Christ, provoked our enemy to battle: "Satan, thou gloriest of thy power and victories over mankind, that there is none able to withstand thy assaults, nor escape thy darts, 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 you here a place most convenient—the wilderness. There shall be no mortal to comfort me against thy assaults; thou shalt have time sufficient; do what thou canst, I shall not fly the place of battle. If thou become victor, thou shalt 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 appertains the fruit of my battle, my victory is theirs, as I am appointed to take the punishment of their sins in my body.”

What comfort ought the remembrance of these signs to be to our hearts! Christ Jesus hath fought our battle; He Himself hath taken us into His care and protection; however the devil may rage by temptations, be they spiritual or corporeal, he is not able to bereave us out of the hand of the almighty Son of God. To Him be all glory for His mercies most abundantly poured upon us!

There remains yet to be spoken of the time when our Lord was tempted, which began immediately after His baptism. Whereupon we have to note the mark, that although the malice of Satan never ceases, but always seeks for means to trouble the godly, yet sometimes he rages more fiercely than others, and that is commonly when God begins to manifest His love and favor 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 that was in Abel, but he did not stir up the cruel heart of Cain against him till God declared His favor toward him by accepting his sacrifice. The same we find in Jacob, Joseph, David, and most evidently in Christ Jesus. How Satan raged at the tidings of Christ's nativity! what blood he caused to be shed on purpose to have murdered Christ in His infancy! The evangelist St. Matthew witnesses that in all the coasts and borders of Bethlehem the children of two years old and less age were murdered without mercy. A fearful spectacle and horrid 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 reports 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 scepter of Judah. The angel had declared the glad tidings to the shepherds, that a Savior, 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 although he could not hinder nor withstand His coming, yet he could 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 strove to cut Him away among the other children before He could open His mouth on His Father's message. 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 is fallen on the ground, then doth it most multiply. But from these things mark, what hath been the practise of the devil from the beginning—most cruelly to rage against God's children when God begins to show them His mercy. And, therefore, marvel not, dearly beloved, although the like come unto you. If Satan fume or roar against you, whether it be

against your bodies by persecution, or inwardly in your conscience by a spiritual battle, be not discouraged, as though you were less acceptable in God's presence, or as if Satan might at any time prevail against you. No; your temptations and storms, that arise so suddenly, argue and witness that the seed which is sown is fallen on good ground, begins to take root and shall, by God's grace, bring forth fruit abundantly in due season and convenient time. That is it which Satan fears, and therefore thus he rages, and shall rage against you, thinking that if he can repulse you now suddenly in the beginning, that then you 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 you may be strengthened, that the world and Satan himself may perceive or understand that God fights your battle. For you remember that being present with you and treating of the same place, I admonished you that Satan could not long sleep when his kingdom was threatened. And therefore I willed you, if you 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 which, life neither can or shall come to mankind. God grant you 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 remains to be spoken how He was tempted, and by what means. The most part of expositors think that all this temptation was in spirit and in imagination only, the corporeal 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 appears to me by the plain text that Christ suffered this temptation in body and spirit. Likewise, as the hunger which Christ suffered, and the desert in which He remained, were not things offered 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 did hear the tempting words of Satan, which entered into the knowledge of the soul, and which, repelling the venom of such temptations, caused the tongue to speak and confute Satan, to our unspeakable comfort and consolation. It appears 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 to 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 it is lawful for me to believe as the Scripture here speaks; 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 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 are afflicted or troubled in body or spirit. The weak and feeble conscience of man under such temptations, commonly gathers and collects a false consequence. For man reasons thus: The body or the spirit is vexed by assaults and temptations of Satan, and he troubles or molests it, therefore God is angry with it, and takes no care of it. I answer, tribulations or grievous vexations of body or of mind are never signs of God's displeasure against the sufferer, neither yet does it follow that God has 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 we may speak hereafter. Now to the temptation.

Matthew 4:2. "And when he fasteth forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards an hungered." Matthew 4:3. 'Then came to Him the tempter,' and said, 'If you 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 before touched upon, that is, He would provoke the devil to battle by the wilderness and long abstinence, but He would not usurp or arrogate any more to Himself in that case than God had wrought with others, His servants and messengers before. But Christ Jesus (as St. Augustine more amply declares), without feeling of hunger, might have endured the whole year, or to time without end, as well as He did endure the space of forty days. For the nature of mankind was sustained those 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 Satan perceiving took occasion, as before, to tempt and assault. Some judge that Satan tempted Christ to gluttony, but this appears little to agree with the purpose of the Holy Ghost; who shows us this history to let us understand that Satan never ceases to oppugn the children of God, but continually, by one mean or other, drives or provokes them to some wicked opinions of their God; and to have them desire stones to be converted into bread, or to desire hunger to be satisfied, has never been sin, nor yet a wicked opinion of God. And therefore I doubt not but the temptation was more spiritual, more subtle, and more dangerous. Satan had respect to the voice of God, which had pronounced Christ to be His well-beloved Son, etc. Against this voice he fights, as his nature is ever to dp 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 he threatens displeasures and damnation; and where God threatens death, there is he bold to pronounce life; and for this course is Satan called a liar from the beginning. And so the purpose of Satan was to drive Christ into desperation, that he should not believe the former voice of God His Father; which appears to be the meaning of this 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 pleased; but mayst Thou not be judged more than mad, and weaker than the brainless fool if Thou believest any such promise? Where are the signs of His love? Art Thou not east out from comfort of all creatures? Thou art in worse case than the brute beasts, for every day they hunt for their prey, and the earth produces grass and herbs for their sustenance, so that none of them are pined and consumed away by hunger; but Thou hast fasted forty days and nights, ever waiting for 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 needest not have endured this languishing for lack of food. But seeing Thou hast long continued thus, and no provision is made for Thee, it is vanity 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 can not express the thousandth part of the malicious despite which lurked in this one temptation of Satan. It was a mocking of Christ and of His obedience. It was a plain denial of God's promise. It was the triumphing voice of him that appeared to have gotten victory. Oh, how bitter this temptation was no creature can understand but such as feel the grief of such darts as Satan easts 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. 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. There 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 thus they cried, "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him; he trusted in God, let him deliver him, if he have the pleasure in him." As though 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 even a true worshiper of His name, He will deliver Him from this calamity. If He deliver Him not, but suffer Him to perish in these anguishes, then it is an assured sign that God has rejected Him as a hypocrite, that shall have no portion of His glory. Thus, I say, Satan takes occasion to tempt, and moves 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 follows: But He, answering, said "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This answer of Christ proves the sentence which we have brought of the aforesaid temptation to be the very meaning of the Holy Ghost; for unless the purpose of Satan has been to have removed Christ from all hope of God's merciful providence toward Him in that His necessity, Christ had not answered directly to his words, saying, "Command that these stones be made bread." But Christ Jesus, perceiving his art and malicious subtilty, answered directly to his meaning, His words nothing regarded; by which Satan was so confounded that he was ashamed to reply any further. But that you may the better understand the meaning of Christ's answer, we will express and repeat it over in more words. "Thou laborest, Satan," would Christ say, "to bring into 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 takes no care for Me, but thou art a deceitful and false corrupt sophister, and thy argument, too, is vain, and full of blasphemies; for thou bindest God's love, mercy, and providence to the having or wanting of bodily provision, which no part of God's Scriptures teach us, but rather the express contrary. As it is written, 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' that is, the very life and felicity of man consists not in the abundance of bodily things, or the possession and having of them makes no man blest or happy; neither shall the lack of them be the cause of his final misery; but the very life of man consists in God, and in His promises pronounced by His own mouth, unto which whoso cleaves unfeignedly shall live the life everlasting. And although all creatures in earth forsake him, yet shall not his bodily life perish till the time appointed by God approach. For God has 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 of 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 His providence was most vigilant toward 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 fallen in them. And therefore I measure not the truth and favor of God by having or by lacking of bodily necessities, but by the promise which He has made to me. As He Himself is immutable, so is His word and promise constant, which I believe, and to which I will adhere, and so cleave, whatever can come to the body outwardly.” In this answer of Christ we may perceive what weapons are to be used against our adversary the devil, and how we may confute his arguments, which craftily, and of malice, he makes against God’s elect. Christ might have repulsed Satan with a word, or by 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 which Christ brings 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 reckons the great travail and divers 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 throughout all perils He had conducted them to the sight and borders of the promised land. And so this Scripture more directly answers to the temptation of Satan; for thus does Satan reason, as before is said, “Thou art in poverty and hast no provision to sustain thy life. Therefore God takes no regard nor care of Thee, as He doth over His chosen children.” Christ Jesus answered: “Thy argument is false and vain; for poverty or necessity precludes not the providence or care of God; which is easy to be proved by the people of God, Israel, who, in the desert, oftentimes lacked things necessary to the sustenance of life, and for lack of the same they grudged and murmured; yet the Lord never cast away the providence and care of them, but according to the word that He had once pronounced, to wit, that they were His peculiar people; and according to the promise made to Abraham, and to them before their 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 has shown to others before us, to our own souls in the hour of temptation, and in the time of our trouble. For what God doth to one at any time, the same appertains to all that depend upon God and His promises. And, therefore, however we are assaulted by Satan, our adversary, within the Word of God is armor 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 divers assaults, the design whereof is always the same; 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 uses and invents divers arguments. Sometimes he calls the sins of their youth, and which they have committed in the time of blindness, to their remembrance; very often he objects their unthankfulness toward God and present imperfections. By sickness, poverty, tribulations in their household, or by persecution, he can allege that God is angry, and regard them not. Or by the spiritual cross which few feel and fewer understand the utility and profit of, he would drive God’s children to desperation, and by infinite means more, he goeth about seeking, like a roaring lion, to undermine and destroy our faith. But it is imposible for him to prevail against us unless we obstinately refuse to use the defense and weapons that God has offered. Yea, I say, that God’s elect can not refuse it, but seek for their Defender when the battle is most strong; for the sobs, groans, and

lamentations of such as fight, yea, the fear they have lest they be vanquished, the calling and prayer for continuance, are the undoubted and right seeking of Christ our champion. We refuse not the weapon, although sometimes, by infirmity, we can not use it as we would. It suffices that your hearts unfeignedly sob for greater strength, for continuance, and for final deliverance by Christ Jesus; that which is wanting in us, His sufficiency doth supply; for it is He that lighteth 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 treated why Christ permitted Himself thus to be tempted. Sundry impediments now call me from writing in this matter, but, by God's grace, at convenient leisure I purpose to finish, and to send it to you. I grant the matter that proceeds from me is not worthy of your pain and labor to read it; yet, seeing it is a testimony of my good mind toward 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 favor and mercy of the Judge, whose eyes and knowledge pierce through the secret cogitations of the heart, in the day of temptation, which shall come, upon all flesh, according to that mercy which you (illuminated and directed by His Holy Spirit) have showed to the afflicted. Now the God of all comfort and consolation confirm and strengthen, you in His power unto the end. Amen.

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