

Jesus Christ. This truth was confirmed from heaven in a very seasonable moment. For Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straitway out of the water; and lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God, descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. What must not be expected from such a beginning! Nor were the highest hopes of believers disappointed. John did no miracle, but all things which John spake of him were true.

5. Another end to be answered by the Baptism of Christ, was, that he himself might be a pattern to his people in all ages, in that act of Christian obedience, which he knew would become sufficiently unpopular to need the sanction of his own example. Yet, even of this consolation, many have endeavoured to rob us; by attempting to prove that Christ was not immersed in Jordan. But, as if they could not rely on the force of their own arguments,

ments, the art of the engraver has been employed to catch the reader's eye, and to correspond with idle criticisms on this serious subject. This is not the only instance, in which a childish fondness for pictures has been hurtful to society. That the finest engravings may exhibit what is opposite to fact, they who are most charmed with them, seldom suspect. If however, we suffer ourselves to be deceived with such things, we are cheaply deceived. For our Lord's example is placed in so clear a light in the New Testament, that if a man had no end whatever in view, but to see it as it is, and to follow what he finds, it may be doubted much if there ever had been any controversy whether he was or was not baptized by immersion.

Where arguments are nearly equal, example is of great influence : but where the best example, and the best of arguments, unite to recommend any branch of Christian duty, what shall we say, if wise and good men are, in that instance, disobedient? Whatever my betters may be disposed to say on such a

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question, I will venture to assert, that no man is obliged to follow another, further than the object followed is himself a follower of Jesus Christ.

6. I shall only add, that another end to be answered by the Baptism of Christ, was to give that evidence to the truth, and importance, of what is now called, the doctrine of the TRINITY, which, however it may be resisted, is not, by any art, to be set aside.

When our Lord was baptized, he was acknowledged to be the Son of God. The voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This voice must have proceeded from some one. It did not proceed from the holy Spirit, but from the Father. The Father then, is distinguished from his Son ; and it is equally evident, the Spirit is distinguished from both. For when that voice from heaven was heard, the Spirit of God silently descended like a dove, and rested upon Jesus : he, therefore, could not  
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be him on whom he descended, nor yet the Father, from whom the voice proceeded.

Afterwards, when our Lord was risen from the dead, he took occasion, in the final settlement of the ordinance of Baptism, to re-inculcate the doctrine of the TRINITY; and that, in a manner so clear, and with a solemnity so great, that were it the only text in the New Testament which treated of that peculiar article of our belief, it would be a reproach to us who have been baptized, on a public profession of believing its contents, were we afraid, or ashamed, of holding fast, under every opposition, the profession of our faith.

The text to which I refer, is thus introduced: All power, saith our Lord, is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. It is no inconsiderable proof of this fact, that the TRINITY in UNITY, is immediately revealed by him; not enigmatically, but in the clearest manner possible; not in secret, but openly; not to be a matter of mere speculation,

but to be connected with practical submission to a positive institute, and with all things whatsoever he hath commanded; not for any short season, as introductory to sublimer sentiments, but always, even to the end of the world.

It was with this preface, and in this connection, that our risen Redeemer said to his disciples, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, in the NAME of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.

In this commission, we may observe, that *teaching* takes the lead; and that they who were to teach others, had been taught of God. It was not what they had invented, but what they had received, which they were commissioned to communicate to mankind. Next, we may observe, that their commission was extended to *all nations*. But it is evident, not that all in all nations were to be baptized, not that any in any nation, while untaught, were to be baptized, but only those  
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who, in all nations, were so taught as to believe in the Son of God.

It further appears, from the same commission, that this was to be done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But where the name is but ONE, the nature can be no MORE. However, though the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the SAME; yet their relation to each other, and to us, IS NOT. If I say, in baptizing a believer, I baptize thee in the name of the FATHER; I pause, and ask, May I add any other agent? Yes, saith my commission, add the SON. I do this, saying, and of the Son. Again I pause, and ask, may I yet add another agent to the Father and the Son? Yes, saith my commission, add the HOLY GHOST. I make this addition, and find my commission is completely closed.

These questions produce the following. Why THREE agents under ONE name, if there were not SO MANY? Or why not MORE, if there had been a greater number? Again,

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if we believe that the Father is a *person*, must we not, to be *consistent*, believe, that the Son, and Holy Ghost, are *persons*? Further; if we believe, the Father is a person truly *divine*, must we not, to be *consistent*, believe, that the Son, and Spirit also, are truly divine persons? Who but such dare we *thus* to connect with the FATHER?

Should it be said, that from being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we are not to infer the unity of their nature, but their joint authority; even by this concession we must suppose them to be three distinct persons: because authority and personality are inseparably connected. Authority, however, is either finite, or infinite. That which is *finite* may be divided, and possessed in different degrees to make up the whole. But if there be no degrees in infinity, he that is infinite in his nature cannot divide his supreme authority with finite beings. There must therefore, in the present case, be *three* persons truly divine; who, being by nature, *one* JEHOVAH, require that homage  
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of the heart, and prostration of the body, in them who believe, and are baptized, which produces one of the most solemn acts of worship which is performed in this world : and as this act is not to be repeated, why are we blamed for taking all the care we can, that it should be done as the Lord our God hath commanded ?

I could, with pleasure, enlarge ; but perhaps, in the opinion of some, I have spoken already too freely, and too much. Were I, however, convinced of this, I would make reasonable concessions ; but nothing short of those arguments I cannot answer, or that authority I have no right to resist, will make me revoke my present opinions. If they have not been stated with all that precision which the subject requires, or with that good temper which might have been expected, yet I trust the attentive will make out my meaning : and, if I may say so much, I believe, that they who differ from me in judgment, must be very partial, if they should think that this discourse is more defective in point of



temper, than some they have admired on the other side of the question.

May ye, my brethren, always remember in whose NAME, and to what ENDS, ye have been baptized, and while ye endeavour to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you, may ye never forget his animating promise;—Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. AMEN.

S E R M O N VI.

ON THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW IV. I.

THEN WAS JESUS LED UP OF THE SPIRIT INTO THE  
WILDERNESS, TO BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL.

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**N**O sooner was our Lord baptized, and that voice from heaven heard, which raised in some the highest expectations, than he was missing; but whither he was gone for more than forty days, it is probable, that neither the Baptist, nor any of his disciples, nor Joseph, nor even Mary, knew.

Of his sudden departure, Mark hath given us this account: And immediately, the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness, and he was there in the wilderness, forty days,  
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tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

The Spirit by whom our Lord was conducted into the wilderness, is sufficiently distinguished from that artful adversary who was eager to meet him there. By an internal impulse from this holy Spirit, instead of going up to Jerusalem, or back again to Nazareth, our Lord walked on towards the wilderness of Judea, musing, no doubt, of great events. Some have thought, from Mark's account of this transaction, that our Lord was caught away from Jordan in a manner similar to the rapture of Philip the Evangelist, after he had baptized the Eunuch; but others are not able to perceive the least foundation for that conjecture.

It may not here, be amiss to remark, that the strongest *internal* impulses of the holy Spirit, are not, in the least, injurious to human liberty; because they are the impulses of *illumination*. But if light, when it is most abundant to produce conviction, prevents the  
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the freedom of our choice, it must, as it descends, in every inferior degree, obstruct it; allow this, and it will follow, that in order to be free, we should prefer this sentiment to that, while we are in the dark, and are unable to discern the least difference between the two. A notion surely, not likely to be adopted by persons of common understanding.

Though the first scene of our Lord's temptation was in the wilderness, it was afterwards shifted to the holy city; and, lastly, removed to an exceeding high mountain; but by what name that mountain was called, or where it stood, we are not informed. Be where it might, on that mountain, as well as in the wilderness, and on the wing of the temple, Satan, in every shifting scene, was more than disappointed.

Let us now take some notice of him who is called the Tempter; and afterwards, glance at each of those temptations which are closely connected with the words of our text.

#### I. The

1. The Tempter, in the chapter before us, is frequently said to be the DEVIL. This unpleasing name hath long since become so vulgar in our language, that it seldom occurs in sober speech. But of that malignant being, he who knew him best, thought fit to say, that he was a murderer from the beginning; that he abode not in the truth; that there is no truth in him; that when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; that he is a liar, and the father of it. The names and the title given to this miserable being, in the scripture, are expressive of his nature and employ. From those names we learn, that he is an accuser, a slanderer, and foe to God and man; by his title, which is, THE TEMPTER, we are informed, that seduction is his business.

How many he seduced on his first revolt, is to us unknown; but that he seduced Eve; that Eve was not content to transgress alone; that being beguiled herself, she succeeded in contaminating our federal head, and that by the fall of Adam, his whole posterity have been  
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been exposed to the seductions of Satan, and will be thus exposed to death; all this is abundantly revealed. The best of men are so far from being exempted from Satan's temptations, that he is eminently their adversary. One of them, who knew this to his cost, said to his select companions, Be sober, be vigilant; because *your* adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

What the Scriptures report of Satan, is the more alarming, since they inform us, he is not alone in his apostacy; but that innumerable associates are combined with him as adversaries to God and man; and they permit us to conclude, that beside those invisible agents, there are multitudes amongst mankind, who walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit who still worketh in the children of disobedience.

I am aware, that they who believe these things, and openly confess their belief, are  
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laughed at for their supposed credulity. But, may I ask, by *whom*? It seems strange, that they who most resemble Satan in his diabolical nature, should most of all be disposed to be offended when they hear of his influence; yet that there is some truth in this observation, is too evident to be disputed. Of late, his existence hath not only been denied, but with so much wit, that the sentiment is like enough to become a fashionable tenet. But he that fears God, as the scriptures have directed, is born to be out of fashion where such sceptical notions are admired; and he feels himself undaunted at such disgrace.

If, as some philosophers assert, we have no knowledge of any thing which did not enter by the medium of our senses, what *knowledge* can we pretend to have of the world of spirits? If of that world, we really have no knowledge, we must either dismiss the subject, or be content with *belief*. It would, however, be ridiculous to believe any thing of evil spirits, which is not carefully founded, on the word of God; but till something  
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*better* can be produced, why should we be ashamed to credit what is there revealed of any part of the invisible world ?

II. Having said these things of the Tempter, let us now glance at each of those temptations which are closely connected with the words of our text.

The FIRST temptation is thus related :—  
And when he [Christ] had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungry. And when the Tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Christ had probably been molested with the secret suggestions of Satan, from his first entering into the wilderness. But now it seems, some suitable form was assumed, to add weight to this bold injunction. Whether the form which Satan assumed, carried in it the air of dignity, or of deep distress, we are not told. Whatever it was, these words, If thou be the Son of God, were  
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made the basis of this temptation. Take them thus, SEEING thou art the Son of God ; then it will follow, that if our Lord had complied with the insolent injunction, he had not treated his audacious adversary with becoming contempt. But it is more probable, Satan meant to suggest, that Jesus was not the Son of God, and that his present situation, and supposed deficiency to supply his pressing wants, afforded ample evidence of that insinuation.

To this insult, our Lord replied, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone ; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The written text which our Lord produced, was taken from the book of Deuteronomy ; and when the place from which it was selected, is carefully surveyed, it seems as if his answer was to this effect : Israel was in a wilderness, dreadful as this, and without bread, for forty years. They were suffered to hunger, but afterwards supplied with manna ;  
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that they might know, that man doth not live by bread only ; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. For Moses gave them not that bread from heaven, but my Father ; who will, when it is proper, supply my present wants ; and that too, in such a manner, as to make it manifest I am his Son.

Much more than this, some imagine, was included in our Lord's reply ; but not being able to discern what they have asserted, I proceed to the SECOND temptation.

Of IT, we thus read : Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple ; and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down ; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and, in their hands, they shall bear thee up, lest, at any time, thou dash thy foot against a stone.

This transportation of Christ from the wilderness to the temple, seems so difficult to be

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accounted for, that some have thought the Evangelist speaks, not of a literal remove, but only of a visionary scene. Were that admitted, or could it be proved, that nothing more was intended by Matthew than to give us a narrative of a dream, yet for that dream there must have been a sufficient cause; but who can account for this supposed dream, any more than for the real removal of the body of Christ? and who can inform us why his religious character should be as well preserved in this dream, as if he had been thoroughly awake?

Dreams are strange things. Common as they are, no theory of them has yet been presented to the public which meets, or which is like to meet, with general approbation. It may, however, be observed, that it is easy to distinguish those objects, and agents, which appear to us, in our sleep, from ourselves, and from those effects which they produce in our minds. If, in any of our slumbers we suffer those evils which we could neither fly from, nor resist, when we awake, our painful

ful feelings, give way to grateful sensations ; we thank God it was but a dream. But if in those unguarded moments, we have done those things with pleasure, which when awake we should think it very criminal to do, though when we rise, we may still say, It was but a dream ; yet we must allow ; that a dream of this description, differs much from the preceding ; and, I am afraid, that such dreams contain stronger proofs of our depravity than are seriously regarded. When the prince of this world approached unto Christ, whether it was in his waking, or in his sleeping moments, he found he had nothing in him ; but in us, we have reason to believe, he ever finds something favourable to his own interest ; nor should any evidence of that fact be treated with derision and contempt.

It must not be inferred from any of these remarks, that I give up, as indefensible, the literal account of this temptation. By no means. There is, in this case, no necessity to depart from that opinion which is common : and he that would dissent from others on se-