

St. Thomas Aquinas,
Catena Aurea (Golden Chain),
Gospel of Matthew 4:1-11 for the first Sunday of Lent

Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, And said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, And said to him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left him; and behold angels came and ministered to him.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Lord being baptized by John with water, is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be baptized by the fire of temptation. ‘Then,’ i.e. when the voice of the Father had been given from heaven.

Chrys., Hom. 13: Whoever thou art then that after thy baptism sufferest grievous trials, be not troubled thereat; for this thou receivedst arms, to fight, not to sit idle. God does not hold all trial from us; first, that we may feel that we are become stronger; secondly, that we may not be puffed up by the greatness of the gifts we have received; thirdly, that the Devil may have experience that we have entirely renounced him; fourthly, that by it we may be made stronger; fifthly, that we may receive a sign of the treasure entrusted to us; for the Devil would not come upon us to tempt us, did he not see us advanced to greater honours.

Hilary: The Devil’s snares are chiefly spread for the sanctified, because a victory over the saints is more desired than over others.

Greg., Hom. in Ev., 16, 1: Some doubt what Spirit it was that led Jesus into the desert, for that it is said after, “The Devil took him into the holy city.” But true and without question agreeable to the context is the received opinion, that it was the Holy Spirit; that His own Spirit should lead Him thither where the evil spirit should find Him and try Him.

Aug., de Trin., 4, 13: Why did He offer Himself to temptation? That He might be our mediator in vanquishing temptation not by aid only, but by example.

Pseudo-Chrys.: He was led by the Holy Spirit, not as an inferior at the bidding of a greater. For we say, “led,” not only of him who is constrained by a stronger than he, but also of him who is induced by reasonable persuasion; as Andrew “found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus.”

Jerome: “Led,” not against His will, or as a prisoner, but as by a desire for the conflict.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Devil comes against men to tempt them, but since He could not come against Christ, therefore Christ came against the Devil.

Greg.: We should know that there are three modes of temptation; suggestion, delight, and consent; and we when we are tempted commonly fall into delight or consent, because being born of the sin of the flesh, we bear with us whence we afford strength for the contest; but God who incarnate in the Virgin’s womb came into the world without sin, carried within Him nothing of a contrary nature. He could then be tempted by suggestion; but the delight of sin never gnawed His soul, and therefore all that temptation of the Devil was without not within Him.

Chrys.: The Devil is wont to be most urgent with temptation, when he sees us solitary; thus it was in the beginning he tempted the woman when he found her without the man, and now too the occasion is offered to the Devil, by the Saviour's being led into the desert.

Gloss. ap. Anselm: This desert is that between Jerusalem and Jericho, where the robbers used to resort. It is called Hammaim, i.e. 'of blood,' from the bloodshed which these robbers caused there; hence the man was said (in the parable) to have fallen among robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, being a figure of Adam, who was overcome by daemons. It was therefore fit that the place where Christ overcame the Devil, should be the same in which the Devil in the parable overcomes man.

Pseudo-Chrys.: Not Christ only is led into the desert by the Spirit, but also all the sons of God who have the Holy Spirit. For they are not content to sit idle, but the Holy Spirit stirs them to take up some great work, i.e. to go out into the desert where they shall meet with the Devil; for there is no righteousness wherewith the Devil is pleased.

For all good is without the flesh and the world, because it is not according to the will of the flesh and the world. To such a desert then all the sons of God go out that they may be tempted.

For example, if you are unmarried, the Holy Spirit has by that led you into the desert, that is, beyond the limits of the flesh and the world, that you may be tempted by lust. But he who is married is unmoved by such temptation. Let us learn that the sons of God are not tempted but when they have gone forth into the desert, but the children of the Devil whose life is in the flesh and the world are then overcome and obey; the good man, having a wife is content; the bad, though he have a wife is not therewith content, and so in all other things.

The children of the Devil go not out to the Devil that they may be tempted. For what need that he should seek the strife who desires not victory? But the sons of God having more confidence and desirous of victory, go forth against him beyond the boundaries of the flesh. For this cause then Christ also went out to the Devil, that He might be tempted of him.

Chrys.: But that you may learn how great a good is fasting, and what a mighty shield against the Devil, and that after baptism you ought to give attention to fasting and not to lusts, therefore Christ fasted, not Himself needing it, but teaching us by His example.

Pseudo-Chrys.: And to fix the measure of our quadragesimal fast, be fasted forty days and forty nights.

Chrys.: But He exceeded not the measure of Moses and Elias, lest it should bring into doubt the reality of His assumption of the flesh.

Greg., Hom. in Ev., 16, 5: The Creator of all things took no food whatever during forty days. We also, at the season of Lent as much as in us lies afflict our flesh by abstinence. The number forty is preserved, because the virtue of the decalogue is fulfilled in the books of the holy Gospel; and ten taken four times amounts to forty.

Or, because in this mortal body we consist of four elements by the delights of which we go against the Lord's precepts received by the decalogue. And as we transgress the decalogue through the lusts of this flesh, it is fitting that we afflict the flesh forty-fold.

Or, as by the Law we offer the tenth of our goods, so we strive to offer the tenth of our time. And from the first Sunday of Lent to the rejoicing of the paschal festival is a space of six weeks, or forty-two days, subtracting from which the six Sundays which are not kept there remain thirty-six. Now as the year consists of three hundred and sixty-five, by the affliction of these thirty-six we give the tenth of our year to God.

Aug., Lib. 83. Quest. q. 81: Otherwise; The sum of all wisdom is to be acquainted with the Creator and the creature. The Creator is the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the creature is partly invisible, - as the soul to which we assign a threefold nature, (as in the command to love God with the whole heart, mind, and soul,) - partly visible as the body, which we divide into four elements; the hot, the cold, the liquid, the solid. The number ten then, which stands for the whole law of life, taken four times, that is, multiplied by that number which we assign for the body, because by the body the law is obeyed or

disobeyed, makes the number forty. All the aliquot parts in this number, viz. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 20, taken together make up the number 50. Hence the time of our sorrow and affliction is fixed at forty days; the state of blessed joy which shall be hereafter is figured in the quinquagesimal festival, i.e. the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost.

Aug., Serm. 210, 2: Not however because Christ fasted immediately after having received baptism, are we to suppose that He established a rule to be observed, that we should fast immediately after His baptism. But when the conflict with the tempter is sore, then we ought to fast, that the body may fulfill its warfare by chastisement, and the soul obtain victory by humiliation.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Lord knew the thoughts of the Devil, that he sought to tempt Him; he had heard that Christ had been born into this world with the preaching of Angels, the witness of shepherds, the inquiry of the Magi, and the testimony of John. Thus the Lord proceeded against him, not as God, but as man, or rather both as God and man. For in forty days of fasting not to have been “an hungred” was not as man; to be ever “an hungred” was not as God. He was “an hungred” then that the God might not be certainly manifested, and so the hopes of the Devil in tempting Him be extinguished, and His own victory hindered.

Hilary: He was “an hungred,” not during the forty days, but after them. Therefore when the Lord hungred, it was not that the effects of abstinence then first came upon Him, but that His humanity was left to its own strength. For the Devil was to be overcome, not by the God, but by the flesh. By this was figured, that after those forty days which He was to tarry on earth after His passion were accomplished, He should hunger for the salvation of man, at which time He carried back again to God His Father the expected gift, the humanity which He had taken on Him.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Devil who had begun to despair when he saw that Christ fasted forty days, now again began to hope when he saw that “he was an hungred;” and “then the tempter came to him.” If then you shall have fasted and after been tempted, say not, I have lost the fruit of my fast; for though it have not availed to hinder temptation, it will avail to hinder you from being overcome by temptation.

Greg.: If we observe the successive steps of the temptation, we shall be able to estimate by how much we are freed from temptation. The old enemy tempted the first man through his belly, when he persuaded him to eat of the forbidden fruit; through ambition when he said, “Ye shall be as gods;” through covetousness when he said, “Knowing good and evil;” for there is a covetousness not only of money, but of greatness, when a high estate above our measure is sought.

By the same method in which he had overcome the first Adam, in that same was he overcome when he tempted the second Adam. He tempted through the belly when he said, “Command that these stones become loaves;” through ambition when he said, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence;” through covetousness of lofty condition in the words, “All these things will I give thee.”

Ambrose, Ambros. in Luc., c. 4. 3: He begins with that which had once been the means of his victory, the palate; “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves.” What means such a beginning as this, but that he knew that the Son of God was to come, yet believed not that He was come on account of His fleshly infirmity. His speech is in part that of an enquirer, in part that of a tempter; he professes to believe Him God, he strives to deceive Him as man.

Hilary: And therefore in the temptation he makes a proposal of such a double kind by which His divinity would be made known by the miracle of the transformation, the weakness of the man deceived by the delight of food.

Jerome: But thou art caught, O Enemy, in a dilemma. If these stones can be made bread at His word, your temptation is vain against one so mighty. If He cannot make them bread, your suspicions that this is the Son of God must be vain.

Pseudo-Chrys.: But as the Devil blinds all men, so is he now invisibly made blind by Christ. He found Him “an hungred” at the end of forty days, and knew not that He had continued through those forty

without being hungry. When he suspected Him not to be the Son of God, he considered not that the mighty Champion can descend to things that be weak, but the weak cannot ascend to things that are high.

We may more readily infer from His not being “an hungred” for so many days that He is God, than from His being “an hungred” after that time that He is man. But it may be said, Moses and Elias fasted forty days, and were men. But they hungred and endured, He for the space of forty days hungred not, but afterwards. To be hungry and yet refuse food is within the endurance of man; not be hungry belongs to the Divine nature only.

Jerome: Christ’s purpose was to vanquish by humility;

Leo, Serm. 39, 3: hence he opposed the adversary rather by testimonies out of the Law, than by miraculous powers; thus at the same time giving more honour to man, and more disgrace to the adversary, when the enemy of the human race thus seemed to be overcome by man rather than by God.

Greg.: So the Lord when tempted by the Devil answered only with precepts of Holy Writ, and He who could have drowned His tempter in the abyss, displayed not the might of His power; giving us an example, that when we suffer any thing at the hands of evil men, we should be stirred up to learning rather than to revenge.

Pseudo-Chrys.: He said not, ‘I live not,’ but, “Man doth not live by bread alone,” that the Devil might still ask, “If thou be the Son of God.” If He be God, it is as though He shunned to display what He had power to do; if man, it is a crafty will that His want of power should not be detected.

Rabanus: This verse is quoted from Deuteronomy. [margin note: c. 8. 3] Whoso then feeds not on the Word of God, he lives not; as the body of man cannot live without earthly food, so cannot his soul without God’s word. This word is said to proceed out of the mouth of God, where he reveals His will by Scripture testimonies.

Pseudo-Chrys.: From this first answer of Christ, the Devil could learn nothing certain whether He were God or man; he therefore betook him to another temptation, saying within himself; This man who is not sensible of the appetite of hunger, if not the Son of God, is yet a holy man; and such do attain strength not to be overcome by hunger; but when they have subdued every necessity of the flesh, they often fall by desire of empty glory. Therefore he began to tempt Him by this empty glory.

Jerome: “Took him,” not because the Lord was weak, but the enemy proud; he imputed to a necessity what the Saviour did willingly.

Rabanus: Jerusalem was called the Holy City, for in it was the Temple of God, the Holy of holies, and the worship of the one God according to the law of Moses.

Remig.: This shews that the Devil lies in wait for Christ’s faithful people even in the sacred places.

Gregory: Behold when it is said that this God was taken by the Devil into the holy city, pious ears tremble to hear, and yet the Devil is head and chief among the wicked; what wonder that He suffered Himself to be led up a mountain by the wicked one himself, who suffered Himself to be crucified by his members.

Gloss. ord.: The Devil places us on high places by exalting with pride, that he may dash us to the ground again.

Remig.: The “pinnacle” is the seat of the doctors; for the temple had not a pointed roof like our houses, but was flat on the top after the manner of the country of Palestine, and in the temple were three stories. It should be known that “the pinnacle” was on the floor, and in each story was one pinnacle. Whether then he placed Him on the pinnacle in the first story, or that in the second, or the third, he placed Him whence a fall was possible.

Gloss. ord.: Observe here that all these things were done with bodily sense, and by careful comparison of the context it seems probable that the Devil appeared in human form.

Pseudo-Chrys.: Perhaps you may say, How could he in the sight of all place Him bodily upon the temple? Perhaps the Devil so took Him as though He were visible to all, while He, without the Devil being aware of it, made Himself invisible.

Gloss, ap. Anselm: He set Him on a pinnacle of the temple when he would tempt Him through ambition, because in this seat of the doctors he had before taken many through the same temptation, and therefore thought that when set in the same seat, He might in like manner be puffed up with vain pride.

Jerome: In the several temptations the single aim of the Devil is to find if He be the Son of God, but he is so answered as at last to depart in doubt; He says, "Cast thyself," because the voice of the Devil, which is always called men downwards, has power to persuade them, but may not compel them to fall.

Pseudo-Chrys.: How does he expect to discover by this proposition whether He be the Son of God or not? For to fly through the air is not proper to the Divine nature, for it is not useful to any. If then any were to attempt to fly when challenged to it, he would be acting from ostentation, and would belong rather to the Devil than to God. If it is enough to a wise man to be what he is, and he has no wish to seem what he is not, how much more should the Son of God hold it not necessary to shew what He is; He of whom none can know so much as He is in Himself?

Ambrose: But as Satan transfigures himself into an Angel of light, and spreads a snare for the faithful, even from the divine Scriptures, so now he uses its texts, not to instruct but to deceive.

Jerome: This verse we read in the ninetieth Psalm, [Ps 91:11] but that is a prophecy not of Christ, but of some holy man, so the Devil interprets Scripture amiss.

Pseudo-Chrys.: For the Son of God in truth is not borne of Angels, but Himself bears them, or if He be borne in their arms, it is not from weakness, lest He dash His foot against a stone, but for the honour. O thou Devil, thou hast read that the Son of God is borne in Angels' arms, hast thou not also read that He shall tread upon the asp and basilisk? But the one text he brings forward as proud, the other he omits as crafty.

Chrys.: Observe that Scripture is brought forward by the Lord only with an apt meaning, but by the Devil irreverently; for that where it is written, "He shall give his Angels charge over thee," is not an exhortation to cast Himself headlong.

Gloss. ap. Anselm: We must explain thus; Scripture says of any good man, that He has given it in charge to His Angels, that is to His ministering spirits, to bear him in their hands, i.e. by their aid to guard him that he dash not his foot against a stone, i.e. keep his heart that it stumble not at the old law written in tables of stone.

Or by the stone may be understood every occasion of sin and error.

Rabanus: It should be noted, that though our Saviour suffered Himself to be placed by the Devil on a pinnacle of the temple, yet refused to come down also at his command, giving us an example, that whosoever bids us ascend the strait way of truth we should obey. But if he would again cast us down from the height of truth and virtue to the depth of error we should not hearken to him.

Jerome: The false Scripture darts of the Devil He brands with the true shield of Scripture.

Hilary: Thus beating down the efforts of the Devil, He professes Himself both God and Lord.

Pseudo-Chrys.: Yet He says not, Thou shalt not tempt me thy Lord God; but, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;" which every man of God when tempted by the Devil might say; for whoso tempts a man of God, tempts God.

Rabanus: Otherwise, it was a suggestion to Him, as man, that He should seek by requiring some miracle to know the greatness of God's power.

Aug., contr. Faust., 22, 36: It is a part of sound doctrine, that when man has any other means, he should not tempt the Lord his God.

Theod. non occ.: And it is to tempt God, in any thing to expose one's self to danger without cause.

Jerome: It should be noted, that the required texts are taken from the book of Deuteronomy only, that He might shew the sacraments of the second Law.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Devil, left in uncertainty by this second reply, passes to a third temptation. Christ had broken the nets of appetite, had passed over those of ambition, he now spreads for Him those of

covetousness; “He taketh him up into a very high mountain,” such as in going round about the earth he had noticed rising above the rest. The higher the mountain, the wider the view from it.

He shews Him not so as that they truly saw the very kingdoms, cities, nations, their silver and their gold; but the quarters of the earth where each kingdom and city lay. As suppose from some high ground I were to point out to you, see there lies Rome, there Alexandria; you are not supposed to see the towns themselves, but the quarter in which they lie. Thus the Devil might point out the several quarters with his finger, and recount in words the greatness of each kingdom and its condition; for that is said to be shewn which is in any way presented to the understanding.

Origen, in Luc., Hom. 30: We are not to suppose that when he shewed him the kingdoms of the world, he presented before Him the kingdom of Persia, for instance, or India; but he shewed his own kingdom, how he reigns in the world, that is, how some are governed by fornication, some by avarice.

Remig.: By “their glory,” is meant, their gold and silver, precious stones and temporal goods.

Rabanus: The Devil shews all this to the Lord, not as though he had power to extend his vision or shew Him any thing unknown. But setting forth in speech as excellent and pleasant, that vain worldly pomp wherein himself delighted, he thought by suggestion of it, to create in Christ a love of it.

Gloss. ord.: He saw not, as we see, with the eye of lust, but as a physician looks on disease without receiving any hurt.

Jerome: An arrogant and vain vaunt; for he hath not the power to bestow all kingdoms, since many of the saints have, we know, been made kings of God.

Pseudo-Chrys.: But such things as are gotten by iniquity in this world, as riches, for instance, gained by fraud or perjury, these the Devil bestows. The Devil therefore cannot give riches to whom he will, but to those only who are willing to receive them of him.

Remig.: Wonderful infatuation in the Devil! To promise earthly kingdoms to Him who gives heavenly kingdoms to His faithful people, and the glory of earth to Him who is Lord of the glory of heaven!

Ambrose, in Luc., c. iv, 11: Ambition has its dangers at home; that it may govern, it is first others’ slave; it bows in flattery that it may rule in honour; and while it would be exalted, it is made to stoop.

Gloss. non occ.: See the Devil’s pride as of old. In the beginning he sought to make himself equal with God, now he seeks to usurp the honours due to God, saying, “If thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Who then worships the Devil must first fall down.

Pseudo-Chrys.: With these words He puts an end to the temptations of the Devil, that they should proceed not further.

Jerome: The Devil and Peter are not, as many suppose, condemned to the same sentence. To Peter it is said, “Get thee behind me, Satan;” i.e. follow thou behind Me who art contrary to My will. But here it is, “Go, Satan,” and is not added, ‘behind Me,’ that we may understand “into the fire prepared for thee and thy angels.”

Remig.: Other copies read, “Get thee behind me;” i.e. remember thee in what glory thou wast created, and into what misery thou hast fallen.

Pseudo-Chrys.: Observe how Christ when Himself suffered wrong at the hands of the Devil, being tempted of him, saying, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,” yet was not moved to chide the Devil. But now when the Devil usurps the honour of God, he is wroth, and drives him away, saying, “Go thy way, Satan;” that we may learn by His example to bear injuries to ourselves with magnanimity, but wrongs to God, to endure not so much as to hear; for to be patient under our own wrongs is praiseworthy, to dissemble when God is wronged is impiety.

Jerome: When the Devil says to the Saviour, “If thou wilt fall down and worship me,” he is answered by the contrary declaration, that it more becomes him to worship Jesus as his Lord and God.

Aug., cont. Serm. Arian, 29: The one Lord our God is the Holy Trinity, to which alone we justly owe the service of piety.

Aug., City of God, book 10, ch. 1: By service is to be understood the honour due to God; as our version renders the Greek words, 'latria,' wherever it occurs in Scripture, by 'service' (servitus), but that service which is due to men (as where the Apostle bids slaves be subject to their master) is in Greek called 'dulia;' while 'latria,' always, or so often that we say always, is used of that worship which belongs to God.

Pseudo-Chrys.: The Devil, we may fairly suppose, did not depart in obedience to the command, but the Divine nature of Christ, and the Holy Spirit which was in Him drove him thence, and "then the Devil left him." Which also serves for our consolation, to see that the Devil does not tempt the men of God so long as he wills, but so long as Christ suffers. And though He may suffer him to tempt for a short time, yet in the end He drives him away because of the weakness of our nature.

Aug., City of God, book 9, ch. 21: After the temptation the Holy Angels, to be dreaded of all unclean spirits, ministered to the Lord, by which it was made yet more manifest to the daemons how great was His power.

Pseudo-Chrys.: He says not 'Angels descended from heaven,' that it may be known that they were ever on the earth to minister to Him, but had now by the Lord's command departed from Him, to give opportunity for the Devil to approach, who perhaps when he saw Him surrounded by Angels would not have come near Him.

But in what matters they ministered to Him, we cannot know, whether in the healing diseases, or purifying souls, or casting out daemons; for all these things He does by the ministration of Angels, so that what they do, Himself appears to do. However it is manifest, that they did not now minister to Him because His weakness needed it, but for the honour of His power; for it is not said that they 'succoured Him,' but that they "ministered to Him."

Gregory, non occ. vid. in Ezek. i. 8. n. 24. in 1 Reg. i. I. n. 1. 2: In these things is shewn the twofold nature in one person; it is the man whom the Devil tempts; the same is God to whom Angels minister.

Pseudo-Chrys.: Now let us shortly review what is signified by Christ's temptations. The fasting is abstinence from things evil, hunger is the desire of evil, bread is the gratification of the desire. He who indulges himself in any evil thing, turns stones into bread. Let him answer to the Devil's persuasions that man does not live by the indulgence of desire alone, but by keeping the commands of God. When any is puffed up as though he were holy he is led to the temple, and when he esteems himself to have reached the summit of holiness he is set on a pinnacle of the temple. And this temptation follows the first, because victory over temptation begets conceit.

But observe that Christ had voluntarily undertaken the fasting; but was led to the temple by the Devil; therefore do you voluntarily use praiseworthy abstinence, but suffer yourself not to be exalted to the summit of sanctity; fly high-mindedness, and you will not suffer a fall.

The ascent of the mountain is the going forward to great riches, and the glory of this world which springs from pride of heart. When you desire to become rich, that is, to ascend the mountain, you begin to think of the ways of gaining wealth and honours, then the prince of this world is shewing you the glory of his kingdom.

In the third place He provides you reasons, that if you seek to obtain all these things, you should serve him, and neglect the righteousness of God.

Hilary: When we have overcome the Devil and bruised his head, we see that Angels' ministry and the offices of heavenly virtues will not be wanting in us.

Aug., de Cons. Evan., ii, 16: Luke has not given the temptations in the same order as Matthew; so that we do not know whether the pinnacle of the temple, or the ascent of the mountain, was first in the action; but it is of no importance, so long as it is only clear that all of them were truly done.

Gloss. ap. Anselm: Though Luke's order seems the more historical; Matthew relates the temptations as they were done to Adam.

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A Sermon of St John Chrysostom on the Gospel for 1st Sunday of Lent

Matthew Chapter 4, Verse 1

“Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.”

Then When? After the descent of the Spirit, after the voice that was borne from above, and said, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And what was marvellous, it was of the Holy Spirit; for this, he here saith, led Him up. For since with a view to our instruction He both did and underwent all things; He endures also to be led up thither, and to wrestle against the devil: in order that each of those who are baptized, if after his baptism he have to endure greater temptations may not be troubled as if the result were unexpected, but may continue to endure all nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things.

Yea, for therefore thou didst take up arms, not to be idle, but to fight. For this cause neither doth God hinder the temptations as they come on, first to teach thee that thou art become much stronger; next, that thou mayest continue modest neither be exalted even by the greatness of thy gifts, the temptations having power to repress thee; moreover, in order that that wicked demon, who is for a while doubtful about thy desertion of him, by the touchstone of temptations may be well assured that thou hast utterly forsaken and fallen from him; fourthly, that thou mayest in this way be made stronger, and better tempered than any steel; fifthly, that thou mayest obtain a clear demonstration of the treasures entrusted to thee.

For the devil would not have assailed thee, unless he had seen thee brought to greater honor. Hence, for example, from the beginning, he attacked Adam, because he saw him in the enjoyment of great dignity. For this reason he arrayed himself against Job, because he saw him crowned and proclaimed by the God of all.

How then saith He, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” For this cause he doth not show thee Jesus simply going up, but “led up” according to the principle of the Economy; signifying obscurely by this, that we ought not of ourselves to leap upon it, but being dragged thereto, to stand manfully.

And see whither the Spirit led Him up, when He had taken Him; not into a city and forum, but into a wilderness. That is, He being minded to attract the devil, gives him a handle not only by His hunger, but also by the place. For then most especially doth the devil assail, when he sees men left alone, and by themselves. Thus did he also set upon the woman in the beginning, having caught her alone, and found her apart from her husband. Just as when he sees us with others and banded together, he is not equally confident, and makes no attack. Wherefore we have the greatest need on this very account to be flocking together continually, that we may not be open to the devil’s attacks.

2. Having then found Him in the wilderness, and in a pathless wilderness (for that the wilderness was such, Mark hath declared, saying, that He “was with the wild beasts”), behold with how much craft he draws near, and wickedness; and for what sort of opportunity he watches. For not in his fast, but in his hunger he approaches Him; to instruct thee how great a good fasting is, and how it is a most powerful shield against the devil, and that after the font, men should give themselves up, not to luxury and drunkenness, and a full table, but to fasting. For, for this cause even He fasted, not as needing it Himself, but to instruct us. Thus, since our sins before the font were brought in by serving the belly: much as if any one who had made a sick man whole were to forbid his doing those things, from which the distemper arose; so we see here likewise that He Himself after the font brought in fasting. For indeed both Adam by the incontinence of the belly was cast out of paradise; and the flood in Noah’s time, this produced; and this brought down the thunders on Sodom. For although there was also a charge of whoredom, nevertheless from this grew the root of each of those punishments; which Ezekiel also signified when he said, “But this was the iniquity of Sodom, that she waxed wanton in pride and in fullness of bread, and in

abundance of luxury.” Thus the Jews also perpetrated the greatest wickedness, being driven upon transgression by their drunkenness and delicacy.

On this account then even He too fasts forty days, pointing out to us the medicines of our salvation; yet proceeds no further, lest on the other hand, through the exceeding greatness of the miracle the truth of His Economy should be discredited. For as it is, this cannot be, seeing that both Moses and Elias, anticipating Him, could advance to so great a length of time, strengthened by the power of God. And if He had proceeded farther, from this among other things His assumption of our flesh would have seemed incredible to many.

Having then fasted forty days and as many nights, *“afterwards he was hungry;”* affording him a point to lay hold of and approach, that by actual conflict He might show how to prevail and be victorious. Just so do wrestlers also: when teaching their pupils how to prevail and overcome, they voluntarily in the lists engage with others, to afford these in the persons of their antagonists the means of seeing and learning the mode of conquest. Which same thing then also took place. For it being His will to draw him on so far, He both made His hunger known to him, and awaited his approach, and as He waited for him, so He dashed him to earth, once, twice, and three times, with such ease as became Him.

3. But that we may not, by hurrying over these victories, mar your profit, let us begin from the first assault, and examine each with exact care.

Thus, after He was hungry, it is said, *“And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”*

For, because he had heard a voice borne from above, and saying, *“This is My beloved Son;”* and had heard also John bearing so large witness concerning Him, and after that saw Him hungry; he was thenceforth in perplexity, and neither could believe that He was a mere man, because of the things spoken concerning Him; nor on the other hand receive it that He was Son of God, seeing Him as he did in hunger. Whence being in perplexity he utters ambiguous sounds. And much as when coming to Adam at the beginning, he feigns things that are not, that he may learn the things that are; even so here also, not knowing clearly the unutterable mystery of the Economy and who He may be that is come, he attempts to weave other nets, whereby he thought to know that which was hidden and obscure. And what saith he? *“If Thou be Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”* He said not, because thou art hungry, but, *“if Thou be Son of God;”* thinking to cheat Him with his compliments. Wherefore also he was silent touching the hunger, that he might not seem to be alleging it, and upbraiding Him. For not knowing the greatness of the Economy which was going on, he supposed this to be a reproach to Him. Wherefore flattering Him craftily, he makes mention of His dignity only.

What then saith Christ? To put down his pride, and to signify that there was nothing shameful in what had happened, nor unbecoming His wisdom; that which the other had passed over in silence to flatter Him, He brings forward and sets it forth, saying, *“Man shall not live by bread alone.”*

So that He begins with the necessity of the belly. But mark, I pray thee, the craft of that wicked demon, and whence he begins his wrestlings, and how he doth not forget his proper art. For by what means he cast out also the first man, and encompassed him with thousands of other evils, with the same means here likewise he weaves his deceit; I mean, with incontinence of the belly. So too even now one may hear many foolish ones say their bad words by thousands because of the belly. But Christ, to show that the virtuous man is not compelled even by this tyranny to do anything that is unseemly, first hungers, then submits not to what is enjoined Him; teaching us to obey the devil in nothing. Thus, because the first man did hereby both offend God, and transgress the law, as much and more doth He teach thee:—though it be no transgression which he commands, not even so to obey.

And why say I, *“transgression”*? *“Why, even though something expedient be suggested by the devils, do not thou,”* saith He, *“even so give heed unto them.”* Thus, for instance, He stopped the mouths of those devils also, proclaiming Him Son of God. And Paul too again rebuked them, crying this self-same thing; and yet what they said was profitable; but he more abundantly dishonoring them, and obstructing

their plot against us, drove them away even when doctrines of salvation were preached by them, closing up their mouths, and bidding them be silent.

And therefore neither in this instance did He consent to what was said. But what saith He? "*Not in bread alone doth man live.*" Now His meaning is like this: "God is able even by a word to nourish the hungry man;" bringing him a testimony out of the ancient Scripture, and teaching us, though we hunger, yea, whatever we suffer, never to fall away from our Lord.

But if a man say, "still He should have displayed Himself;" I would ask him, with what intent, and for what reason? For not at all that he might believe did the other so speak, but that he might, as he thought, over-argue Him into unbelief. Since the first of mankind were in this way beguiled and over-argued by him, not putting earnest faith in God. For the contrary of what God had said he promised them, and puffed them up with vain hopes, and brought them to unbelief, and so east them out of the blessings they actually possessed. But Christ signifies Himself not to have consented, either to him then or afterwards to the Jews his partisans, in their demand of signs: invariably instructing us, whatever we may have power to do, yet to do nothing vainly and at random; nor even when want urges to obey the devil.

4. What then doth this accursed one? Overcome, and unable to persuade Him to do his bidding, and that when pressed by such violent hunger, he proceeds to another thing, saying,

"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone."

What can the reason be, that at each temptation He adds this, "If Thou be Son of God?" Much the same as he did in that former case, he doth also at this time. That is, as he then slandered God, saying, "In the day ye eat, your eyes shall be opened;" thereby intending to signify, that they were beguiled and overreached, and had received no benefit; even so in this case also he insinuates this same thing, saying, "in vain God hath called Thee Son, and hath beguiled Thee by His gift; for, if this be not so, afford us some dear proof that Thou art of that power." Then, because Christ had reasoned with him from Scripture, he also brings in a testimony of the prophet.

How then doth Christ? He is not indignant, nor provoked, but with that extreme gentleness He reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying, "*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God:*" teaching us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long-suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory.

But mark thou his folly, even by the very testimony which he produced. For while the testimonies cited by the Lord were both of them spoken with exceeding fitness: his, on the other hand, were chance and random sayings, neither did he bring forward on his part that which applied to the matter in hand. For that it is written, "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," this surely is not advice to dash and toss one's self down headlong; and moreover, this was not so much as spoken concerning the Lord. However, this for the time He did not expose, although there was both insult in his manner of speech, and great inconsistency. For of God's Son no man requires these things: but to cast one's self down is the part of the devil, and of demons. Whereas God's part is to raise up even them that are down. And if He ought to have displayed His own power, it would not have been by casting and tossing Himself down at random, but by saving others. But to cast ourselves down precipices, and into pits, pertains properly to his troop. Thus, for example, the juggler among them doth everywhere.

But Christ, even when these things are said, doth not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him. For the sayings, "Man shall not live by bread alone;" and, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," suited one not greatly revealing Himself, but representing Himself as one of the many.

But marvel thou not, if he in reasoning with Christ oftentimes turn himself about. For as pugilists, when they have received deadly blows, reel about, drenched in much blood, and blinded; even so he too, darkened by the first and the second blow, speaks at random what comes uppermost: and proceeds to his third assault.

5. *“Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.”*

For since he was now come to sinning against the Father, saying, that all that is the Fathers was his, and was endeavoring to make himself out to be God, as artificer of the universe; He then rebuked him: but not even then with vehemence, but simply, “Get thee hence, Satan;” which itself had in it something of command rather than of rebuke. For as soon as He had said to him, “Get thee hence,” He caused him to take to flight; since he brought not against Him any other temptations.

And how saith Luke, that “he ended all temptation.” To me it seems that in mentioning the chief of the temptations, he had spoken of all, as though the rest too were included in these. For the things that form the substance of innumerable evils are these: to be a slave to the belly, to do anything for vainglory, to be in subjection to the madness of riches Which accordingly that accursed one considering, set last the most powerful of all, I mean the desire of more: and though originally, and from the beginning, he was travailing to come to this, yet he kept it for the last, as being of more force than the rest. For in fact this is the manner of his wrestling, to apply those things last, which seem more likely to overthrow. And this sort of thing he did with respect to Job likewise. Wherefore in this instance too, having begun with the motives which seem to be viler and weaker, he goes on to the more prevailing.

How then are we to get the better of him? In the way which Christ that taught us, by fleeing to God for refuge; and neither to be depressed in famine, as believing in God who is able to feed even with a word; nor amidst whatever good things we may receive to tempt Him who gave them, but to be content with the glory which is from above, making no account of that which is of men, and on every occasion to despise what is beyond our need. For nothing doth so make us fall under the power of the devil, as longing for more, and loving covetousness. And this we may see even by what is done now. For now also there are those who say, “All these things will we give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship;” who are indeed men by nature, but have become his instruments. Since at that time too he approached Him, not by himself only, but also by others. Which Luke also was declaring, when he said, that “he departed from Him for a season;” showing that hereafter he approached Him by his proper instruments.

“And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” For when the assault was going on, He suffered them not to appear, that He might not thereby drive away the prey; but after He had convicted him in all points, and caused him to take to flight, then they appear: that thou also mayest learn, that after thy victories which are copied from His, angels will receive thee also applauding thee, and waiting as guards on thee in all things. Thus, for example, angels take Lazarus away with them, after the furnace of poverty and of famine and of all distress. For as I have already said, Christ on this occasion exhibits many things, which we ourselves are to enjoy.

6. Forasmuch then as all these things have been done for thee, do thou emulate and imitate His victory. And should any one approach thee of those who are that evil spirit’s servants, and savor the things that be of him, upbraiding thee and saying, “If thou art marvellous and great, remove the mountain;” be not troubled, nor confounded, but answer with meekness, and say some such thing as thou hast heard thy Lord say: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Or should he, offering glory and dominion, and an endless amount of wealth, enjoin thee to worship him, do thou stand again manfully. For neither did the devil deal so with the common Lord of us all only, but every day also he brings these his machinations to bear on each of His servants, not in mountains only and in wildernesses, nor by himself: but in cities likewise, in market-places, and in courts of justice, and by means of our own kindred, even men. What then must we do? Disbelieve him altogether, and stop our ears against him, and hate him when he flatters, and when he proffers more, then so much the more shun him. Because in Eve’s case also, when he was most lifting her up with hopes, then he cast her down, and did her the greatest evils. Yea, for he is an implacable enemy, and hath taken up against us such war as

excludes all treaty. And we are not so earnest for our own salvation, as he is for our ruin. Let us then shun him, not with words only, but also with works; not in mind only, but, also in deed; and let us do none of the things which he approves, for so shall we do all those which God approves. Yea, for he makes also many promises, not that he may give, but that he may take. He promises by rapine, that he may deprive us of the kingdom, and of righteousness; and sets treasures in the earth as a kind of gins or traps, that he may deprive us both of these and of the treasures in Heaven, and he would have us be rich here, that we may not be rich there.

And if he should not be able by wealth to cast us out of our portion there, he comes another way, the way of poverty; as he did with respect to Job. That is, when he saw that wealth did him no harm, he weaves his toils by poverty, expecting on that side to get the better of him. But what could be more foolish than this? Since he that hath been able to bear wealth with moderation, much more will he bear poverty with manliness; and he who desires not riches when present, neither will he seek them when absent; even as that blessed man did not, but by his poverty, on the other hand, he became still more glorious. For of his possessions that wicked demon had power indeed to deprive him, but his love toward God he not only could not take away, but made it even stronger, and when he had stripped him of all, he caused him to abound with more blessings; wherefore also he was in perplexity. For the more plagues he brought upon him, the more mighty he then saw him become. And therefore, as you know, when he had gone through all, and had thoroughly tried his metal, because he made no way, he ran to his old weapon, the woman, and assumes a mask of concern, and makes a tragical picture of his calamities in most pitiable tone, and feigns that for removal of his evil he is introducing that deadly counsel. But neither so did he prevail; nay, for his bait was perceived by that wondrous man, who with much wisdom stopped the mouth of the woman speaking at his instigation.

Just so we likewise must act: though it be a brother, a tried friend, a wife, whom you will of those nearest to us, whom he hath entered into, and so utters something not convenient, we must not receive the counsel for the person of him who so speaks, but for the deadly counsel turn away from the speaker. Since in fact now also he doth many such things, and puts before him a mask of sympathy, and while he seems to be friendly, he is instilling his pernicious words, more grievous than poisons. Thus, as to flatter for evil is his part, so to chastise for our good, is God's.

7. Let us not then be deceived, neither let us by every mean seek after the life of ease. For "whom the Lord loveth," it is said, "He chasteneth." Wherefore when we enjoy prosperity, living in wickedness, then most of all should we grieve. For we ought ever to be afraid while we sin, but especially when we suffer no ill. For when God exacts our penalties by little and little, he makes our payment for these things easy to us; but when he is long-suffering for each of our negligences, He is storing us up, if we continue in such things, unto a great punishment. Since, if for the well-doers affliction be a necessary thing, much more for them that sin.

See for instance how much long-suffering Pharaoh met with, and afterwards underwent for all most extreme punishment: in how many things Nebuchadnezzar offended, yet at the end expiated all; and the rich man, because he had suffered no great ill here, for this very cause chiefly became miserable, for that having lived in luxury in the present life, he departed to pay the penalty of all these things there, where he could not obtain anything at all to soothe his calamity.

Yet for all this some are so cold and senseless, as to be always seeking only the things that are here, and uttering those absurd sayings, "Let me enjoy all things present for a time, and then I will consider about things out of sight: I will gratify my belly, I will be a slave to pleasures, I will make full use of the present life; give me to-day, and take tomorrow." Oh excess of folly! Why, wherein do they who talk so differ from goats and swine? For if the prophet permits not them to be accounted men, that "neigh after their neighbors wife," who shall blame us for esteeming these to be goats and swine, and more insensible than asses, by whom those things are held uncertain, which are more evident than what we see? Why, if thou believest nothing else, attend to the devils in their scourging, to them who had our hurt for their object in

all their practice, both in word and deed. For thou wilt not, I am sure, contradict this, that they do all to increase our security, and to do away with the fear of hell, and to breed disbelief of the tribunals in that world. Nevertheless, they that are so minded, by cryings and wailings do oftentimes proclaim the torments that are there. Whence is it then that they so speak, and utter things contrary to their own will? From no other cause, but because they are under the pressure of stronger compulsion. For they would have not been minded of their own accord to confess either that they are tormented by dead men, or that they at all suffer anything dreadful.

Wherefore now have I said this? Because evil demons confess hell, who would fain have hell disbelieved; but thou who enjoyest honor so great, and hast been a partaker in unutterable mysteries, dost not so much as imitate them, but art become more hardened even than they.

8. "But who," one will say, "hath come from those in hell, and hath declared these things?" Why, who hath arrived here from heaven, and told us that there is a God who created all things? And whence is it dear that we have a soul? For plainly, if thou art to believe the things only that are in sight, both God and angels, and mind and soul, will be matter of doubting to thee, and in this way thou wilt find all the doctrines of the truth gone.

Yet surely, if thou art willing to believe what is evident, the things invisible ought to be believed by thee, rather than those which are seen. Even though what I say be a paradox, nevertheless it is true, and among men of understanding is fully acknowledged. For whereas the eyes are often deceived, not in the things unseen only (for of those they do not so much as take cognizance), but even in those which men think they actually see, distance and atmosphere, and absence of mind, and anger, and care, and ten thousand other things impeding their accuracy; the reasoning power of the soul on the other hand, if it receive the light of the divine Scriptures, will prove a more accurate, an unerring standard of realities.

Let us not then vainly deceive ourselves, neither in addition to the carelessness of our life, which is the offspring of such doctrines as these, heap up to ourselves, for the very doctrines themselves, a more grievous fire. For if there be no judgment, and we are not to give account of our deeds, neither shall we receive rewards for our labors. Observe which way your blasphemies tend, when ye say, that God, who is righteous, and loving, and mild, overlooks so great labors and toils. And how can this be reasonable? Why, if by nothing else, at any rate by the circumstances of thine own house, I bid thee weigh these things, and then thou wilt see the savage and inhuman beyond measure, and wilder than the very wild beasts, thou wouldest not choose at thy death to leave unhonored the servant that had been affectionate to thee, but requitest him both with freedom, and with a gift of money; and forasmuch as in thine own person hereafter, having departed, thou wilt be able to do him no good, thou givest charge concerning him to the future inheritors of thy substance, beseeching, exhorting, doing everything, so that he may not remain unrewarded.

So then thou, who art evil, art so kind and loving towards thy servant; and will the Infinite Goodness, that is, God, the Unspeakable Love to man, the kindness so vast: will He overlook and leave uncrowned His own servants, Peter and Paul, and James, and John, those who every day for His sake suffered hunger, were bound, were scourged, were drowned in the sea, were given up to wild beasts, were dying, were suffering so great things as we cannot so much reckon up? And whereas the Olympic judge proclaims and crowns the victor, and the master rewards the servant, and the king the soldier, and each in general him that hath done him service, with what good things he can; shall God alone, after those so great toils and labors, repay them with no good thing great or small? Shall those just and pious men, who have walked in every virtue, lie in the same state with adulterers, and parricides, and manslayers, and violators of tombs? And in what way can this be reasonable? Since, if there be nothing after our departure hence, and our interests reach no further than things present, those are in the same the same. For what though hereafter, as thou sayest, they fare alike? Yet here, the whole of their time, the wicked have been at ease, the righteous in chastisement. And this what sort of tyrant, what savage and relentless man did ever so devise, touching his own servants and subjects?

Didst thou mark the exceeding greatness of the absurdity, and in what this argument issues? Therefore if thou wilt not any other way, yet by these reasonings be instructed to rid thyself of this wicked thought, and to flee from vice, and cleave to the toils which end in virtue: and then shalt thou know certainly that our concerns are not bounded by the present life. And if any one ask thee, “Who hath come from thence and brought word what is there?” say unto him, “of men not one; for surely he would have been often disbelieved, as vaunting, and exaggerating the thing; but the Lord of the angels hath brought word with exactness of all those things. What need then have we of any man, seeing He, that will demand account of us, crieth aloud every day, that He hath both made ready a hell, and prepared a kingdom; and affords us great demonstrations of these things? For if He were not hereafter to judge, neither would he have exacted any penalty here.

9. “Well, but as to this very point how can it be reasonable? that of the wicked some should be punished, others not? I mean, if God be no respecter of persons, as surely He is not why can it be that of one He exacts a penalty, but another He suffers to go away unpunished? Why, this is again more inexplicable than the former.”

Yet if you are willing to hear what we say with candor, we will solve this difficulty also.

What then is the solution? He neither exacts penalty of all here, lest thou shouldst despair of the resurrection, and lose all expectation of the judgment, as though all were to give account here; nor doth He suffer all to go away unpunished, lest on the other hand thou shouldst account all to be without His providence; but He both punishes and abstains from punishing: by those whom He punishes, signifying that in that world also He will exact a penalty of such as are unpunished here; and by those whom He doth not punish, working upon thee to believe that there is some fearful trial after our departure hence.

But if He were altogether indifferent about our former deeds, He neither would have punished any here, nor have conferred benefits. But now thou seest Him for thy sake stretching out the heaven, kindling the sun, founding the earth, pouting forth the sea, expanding the air, and appointing for the moon her courses, setting unchangeable laws for the seasons of the years, and all other things too performing their own courses exactly at a sign from Him. For both our nature, and that of creatures irrational, of them that creep, that walk, that fly, that swim, in marshes, in springs, in rivers, in mountains, in forests, in houses, in the air, in plains; plants also, and seeds, and trees, both wild and cultivated, both fruitful and unfruitful; and all things in general, moved by that unwearied Hand, make provision for our life, affording to us of themselves their ministry, not for our need only, but also for our feeling of high station.

Seeing therefore order so great and fair (and yet we have not mentioned so much as the least portion thereof), darest thou say, that He who for thy sake hath wrought things so many and great will overlook thee in the most critical points, and suffer thee when dead to lie with the asses and swine: and that having honored thee with so great a gift, that of godliness, whereby He hath even equaled thee with the angels, He will overlook thee after thy countless labors and toils?

And how can this be reasonable? Why, these things, if we be silent “the stones will immediately cry out;” so plain are they, and manifest, and more lurid than the sunbeam itself.

Having then considered all these things, and having convinced our own soul, that after our departure hence, we shall both stand at the fearful judgment-seat, and give account of all that we have done, and shall bear our penalty, and submit to our sentence, if we continue in our negligences; and shall receive crowns and unutterable blessings, if we are willing to give a little heed to ourselves; let us both stop the mouths of them who gainsay these things, and ourselves choose the way of virtue; that with due confidence departing to that tribunal, we may attain unto the good things that are promised us, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion, now and ever, world without end. Amen

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A Sermon of St John Chrysostom on the Epistle – 1st Sunday of Lent

2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1 and 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 2.

And we helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith: In an accepted time have I heard thee; and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

For since he said, God beseeches, and we are ambassadors and suppliants unto you, that ye be “reconciled unto God:” lest they should become supine, he hereby again alarms and arouses them, saying: “We entreat that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” ‘For let us not,’ he says, ‘therefore be at ease, because He beseeches and hath sent some to be ambassadors; nay, but for this very reason let us make haste to please God and to collect spiritual merchandise;’ as also he said above, “The love of God constraineth us,” (ch. v. 14) that is presseth, driveth, urgeth us, ‘that ye may not after so much affectionate care, by being supine and exhibiting no nobleness, miss of such great blessings. Do not therefore because He hath sent some to exhort you, deem that this will always be so. It will be so until His second coming; until then He beseeches, so long as we are here; but after that is judgment and punishment.’ Therefore, he says, “we are constrained.”

For not only from the greatness of the blessings and His loving kindness, but also from the shortness of the time he urgeth them continually. Wherefore he saith also elsewhere, “For now is our salvation nearer.” (Rom. xiii. II.) And again; “The Lord is at hand.” (Philippians chapter 4, verse 5) But here he does something yet more. For not from the fact that the remainder of the time is short and little, but also from its being the only season available, for salvation, he incited them.

For, “Behold,” he saith, “now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Let us therefore not let slip the favorable opportunity but display a zeal worthy of the grace. For therefore is it that we also press forward, knowing both the shortness and the suitability of the time. Wherefore also he said; “And working together we entreat also. Working together” with you; ‘for we work together with you, rather than with God for Whom we are ambassadors. For He is in need of nothing, but the salvation all passeth over to you.’ But if it is even with God that he speaks of working together, he repudiates not even this [interpretation]; for he says in another place, “we are God’s fellow-workers:” (1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 9) in this way to save men. Again, “We entreat also.” For he indeed, when beseeching, doth not barely beseech, but sets forth these His just claims; namely, that He gave His Son, the Righteous One that did not so much as know sin, and made Him to be sin for us sinners, that we might become righteous: which claims having, and being God, He displayed such goodness. But what we beseech is that ye would receive the benefit and not reject the gift. Be persuaded therefore by us, and “receive not the grace in vain.” For lest they should think that this of itself is “reconciliation,” believing on Him that calleth; he adds these words, requiting that earnestness which respects the life. For, for one who hath been freed from sins and made a friend to wallow in the former things, is to return again unto enmity, and to “receive the grace in vain,” in respect of the life. For from “the grace” we reap no benefit towards salvation, if we live impurely; nay, we are even harmed, having this greater aggravation even of our sins, in that after such knowledge and such a gift we have gone back to our former vices. This however he does not mention as yet: that he may not make his work harsh, but says only that we reap no benefit. Then he also reminds of a prophecy, urging and compelling them to bestir themselves in order to lay hold of their own salvation. “For,” saith he, “At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succor thee: behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” “The acceptable time.” What is this? That of the Gift, that of the Grace, when it is appointed not that an account should be required of our sins nor penalty exacted; but besides being delivered, that we should also enjoy ten thousand goods, righteousness, sanctification, and all the rest. For how much toil would it have behoved us to undergo in order to obtain this “time!” But, behold, without our toiling at all it hath come, bringing remission of all that was before. Wherefore also He calls it “acceptable,” because He both

accepted those that had transgressed in ten thousand things, and not acceded merely, but advanced them to the highest honor; just as when a monarch arrives, it is a time not for judgment, but for grace and pardon. Wherefore also He calleth it acceptable. Whilst then we are yet in the lists, whilst we are at work in the vineyard, whilst the eleventh hour is left [us], let us draw nigh and show forth life; for it is also easy. For he that striveth for the mastery at such a time, when so great a gift hath been shed forth, when so great grace, will early obtain the prizes. For in the case of monarchs here brow also, at the time of their festivals, and when they appear in the dress of Consuls, he who bringeth a small offering receiveth large gifts; but on the days in which they sit in judgment, much strictness, much sifting is requisite. Let us too therefore strive for the mastery in the time of this gift. It is a day of grace, of grace divine; wherefore with ease even we shall obtain the crown. For if when laden with so great evils He both received and delivered us: when delivered from all and contributing our part, shall He not rather accept us?

Then, as it is his constant worn, namely, to place himself before them and bid them hence to take their example so he does in this Ver. 3. "Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed:," Persuading them not from considering "the time" only, but also those that had successfully labored with them. And behold with what absence of pride. For he said not, 'Look at us how we are such and such,' but, for the present, it is only to do away accusation that he relates his own conduct. And he mentions two chief paints of a blameless life, "none" in "any" thing. And he said not 'accusation,' but, what was far less, "occasion of stumbling;" that is, giving ground against us to none for censure, for condemnation, "that our ministration be not blamed;" that is, that none may take hold of it. And again, he said not, 'that it be not accused,' but that it may not have the least fault, nor any one have it in his power to animadvert upon it in any particular.

Ver. 4. "*But in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses,*"

This is far greater. For it is not the same thing to be free from accusation; and to exhibit such a character as in everything to appear "ministers of God." For neither is it the same thing to be quit of accusation, and to be covered with praises. And he said not appearing, but "commending," that is 'proving.' Then he mentions also whence they became such. Whence then was it? "In much patience" he says, laying the foundation of those good things. Wherefore he said not barely "patience," but "much," and he shows also how great it was. For to bear some one or two things is no great matter. But he addeth even snow storms of trials in the words, "In tribulation, in necessities." This is a heightening of affliction, when the evils are unavoidable, and there lies upon one as it were a necessity hardly extricable of misfortune. "In distresses." Either he means those of hunger and of other necessities, or else simply those of their trials.

Ver. 5. "*In stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings,*"

Yet every one of these by itself was intolerable, the being scourged only, and being bound only, and being unable through persecution to remain fixed any where, but when both all, and all at once, assail, consider what a soul they need. Then along with the things from without, he mentions those imposed by himself. Ver. 5, 6. "*in labours, in watchings, in fastings in chastity, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned.*" But by "chastity" here, he means either chasteness again, or general purity, or incorruptness, or even his preaching the Gospel freely.

"In knowledge." What is "in knowledge?" In wisdom such as is given from God; that which is truly knowledge; not as those that seem to be wise and boast of their acquaintance with the heathen discipline, but are deficient in this.

"In long-suffering, in kindness" For this also is a great note of a noble soul, though exasperated and goaded on every side, to bear all with long-suffering. Then to show whence he became such, he added;

"In the Holy Ghost." 'For in Him,' he saith, 'we do all these good works.' But observe when it is that he has mentioned the aid of the Holy Ghost. After he had set forth what was from himself. Moreover, he seems to me to say another thing herein. What then is this? Namely, 'we have both been filled with

abundance of the Spirit and hereby also give a proof of our Apostleship in that we have been counted worthy of spiritual gifts.’ For if this be grace also, yet still he himself was the cause who by his good works and his toils attracted that grace. And if any should assert that besides what has been said, he shows that in his use of the gifts of the Spirit also he gave none offence; he would not miss of his meaning. For they who received the [gift of] tongues amongst them and were lifted up, were blamed. For it is possible for one even in receiving a gift of the Spirit, not to use it aright. ‘But not so we,’ he saith, ‘but in the Spirit also, that is, in the gifts also, we have been blameless.’

“In love unfeigned.” This was the cause of all those good things; this made him what he was; this caused the Spirit also to abide with him, by Whose aid also all things were rightly done of him. Ver. 7. *“In the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left.”*

A thing he says in many places, that ‘we continued neither to handle the word of God deceitfully nor to adulterate it.’

“In the power of God.” That which he always does ascribing nothing to himself but the whole to God, and imputing whatsoever he hath done aright to Him, this he hath done here also. For since he uttered great things, and affirmed that he had manifested in all things an irreproachable life and exalted wisdom, he ascribes this to the Spirit and to God. For neither were those commonplace things which he had said. For if it be a difficult thing even for one who lives in quiet to do aright and be irreproachable, consider him who was harassed by so great temptations, and yet shone forth through all, what a spirit he was of! And yet he underwent not these alone, but even far more than these, as he mentions next. And what is indeed marvelous is, not that he was irreproachable though sailing in such mighty waves, nor that he endured all nobly, but all with pleasure even. Which things, all, he makes clear to us by the next words, saying,

“By the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left.”

Seest thou his self-possession of soul and well-strung spirit? For he shows that afflictions are arms not only which strike not down, but do even fortify and make stronger. And he calls those things ‘left,’ which seem to be painful; for such those are which bring with them the reward. Wherefore then doth he call them thus? Either in conformity with the conception of the generality, or because God commanded us to pray that we enter not into temptation.

Ver. 8. *“By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet known;”*

What saying thou? That thou enjoyest honor, and setting down this as a great thing? Yes,’ he saith. Why, forsooth? For to bear dishonor indeed is a great thing, but to partake of honor requires not a vigorous soul. Nay, it needs a vigorous and exceeding great soul, that he who enjoys it may not be thrown and break his neck. Wherefore he glories in this as well as in that, for he shone equally in both. But how is it a weapon of righteousness? Because that the teachers are held in honor induceth many unto godliness. And besides, this is a proof of good works, and this glorifieth God. And this is, further, an instance of the wise contrivance of God, that by things which are opposite He brings in the Preaching. For consider. Was Paul bound? This too was on behalf of the Gospel. For, saith he, “Now, brethren, I desire you should know, that the things which have happened to me, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel: so that my bands are made manifest in Christ, in all the court, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, growing confident by my bands, are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear.” (Philippians chapter 1, verses 12 - 14) Again, did he enjoy honor? This too again rendered them more forward. “By evil report and good report.” For not only did he bear those things nobly which happen to the body, the ‘afflictions, and whatever he enumerated, but those also which touch the soul; for neither are these wont to disturb slightly. Jeremiah at least having borne many temptations, gave in upon these, and when he was reproached, said, “I will not prophesy, neither will I name the Name of the Lord. (Jer. xx.9.) And David too many places complains of reproach. Isaiah also, after many things, exhorteth concerning this, saying, “Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye

overcome by their reviling.” (Isaiah chapter 51, verse 7. LXX.) And again, Christ also to His disciples; “When they shall speak all manner of evil against you falsely, rejoice and be exceeding glad,” (Matt. v. II, 12.) He saith, “for great is your reward in heaven.” Elsewhere too He says, “And leap for joy.” (Luke chapter 6, verse 23) But He would not have made the reward so great, had soul; for the pain is both of the body and of the soul; but here it is of the soul alone. Many at any rate have fallen by these alone, and have lost their own souls. And to Job also the reproaches of his friends appeared more grievous than the worms and the sores. For there is nothing, there is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul. Wherefore along with the perils and the toils he names these also, saying, “By glory and dishonor.” At any rate, many of the Jews also on account of glory derived from the many would not believe. For they feared, not lest they should be punished, but lest they should be put out of the synagogue. Wherefore He saith, “How can ye believe which receive glory one of another?” (John chapter 5, verse 44) And we may see numbers who have indeed despised all dangers, but have been worsted by glory. “As deceivers, and yet true.” This is, “by evil report and good report.” Ver. 9. “*As dying, and behold we live; as chastised, and not killed.*” This is, “by glory and dishonor.” For by some they were well known and much sought after, whilst others designed not to know them at all. “As dying, and behold, we live.”

As under sentence of death and condemned; which was itself also matter of dishonor. But this he said, to show both the unspeakable power of God and their own patience. For so far as those who plotted against us were concerned, we died; and this is what all suppose; but by God’s aid we escaped the dangers. Then to manifest also on what account God permits these things, he added, “As chastened, and not killed.”

Showing that the gain accruing to them from their temptations, even before the rewards, was great, and that their enemies against their will did them service. Ver. 10. “*As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things.*” For by those that are without, indeed, we are suspected of being in despair; but we give no heed to them; yea, we have our pleasure at the full. And he said not “rejoicing” only, but added also its perpetuity, for he says? “always rejoicing” What then can come up to this life? wherein, although dangers so great assault, the joy becometh greater. “As needy, yet enriching many.”

Some indeed affirm that the spiritual riches are spoken of here; but I would say that the carnal are so too; for they were rich in these also, having, after a new kind of manner, the houses of all opened to them. And this too he signified by what follows, saying,

“As having nothing, and possessing all things.”

And how can this be? Yea rather, how can the opposite be? For he that possesseth many things hath nothing; and he that hath nothing possesseth the goods of all. And not here only, but also in the other points, contraries were to have all things, let bring forth this man himself into the midst, who commanded the world and was lord not only of their substance, but of their very eyes even. “If possible,” he says, “ye would have plucked out your eyes, and have given them to me.” (Galatians chapter 4, verse 15)

Now these things he says, to instruct us not to be disturbed at the opinions of the many, though they call us deceivers, though they know us not, though they count us condemned, and appointed unto death, to be in sorrow, to be in poverty, to have nothing, to be (us, who are in cheerfulness) desponding: because that the sun even is not clear to the blind, nor the pleasure of the sane intelligible to the mad. For the faithful only are fight judges of these matters, and are not pleased and pained at the same things as other people. For if any one who knew nothing of the games were to see a boxer, having wounds upon him and wearing a crown; he would think him in pain on account of the wounds, not understanding the pleasure the crown would give him. And these therefore, because they know what we suffer but do not know for what we suffer them, naturally suspect that there is nought besides these; for they see indeed the wrestling and the dangers, but not the prizes and the crowns and the subject of the contest. What then were the “all things” which Paul possessed, when he said, “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things?” Things

temporal, things spiritual. For he whom the cities received as an angel, for whom they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to him, (Galatians chapter 4, verse 14 and Galatians chapter 4, verse 15) he for whom they laid down their own necks, how had he not all things that were theirs? (Romans chapter 16, verse 4) But if thou desirest to see the spiritual also, thou wilt find him in these things also especially rich. For he that was so dear to the King of all as even to share in unspeakable things with the Lord of the angels, (ch. xii. 4.) how was not he more opulent than all men, and had all things? Devils had not else been so subject to him, suffering and disease had not so fled away.

And let us therefore, when we suffer aught for Christ's sake, not merry bear it nobly but also rejoice. If we fast, let us leap for joy as if enjoying luxury; if we be insulted, let us dance as if praised; if we spend, let us feel as if gaining; if we below on the poor, let us count ourselves to receive: for he that gives not thus will not give readily. When then thou hast a mind to scatter abroad, look not at this only in almsgiving, but also in every kind of virtue, compute not alone the severity of the toils, but also the sweetness of the prizes; and before all the subjects of this wrestling, our Lord Jesus; and thou wilt readily enter upon the contest, and wilt live the whole time in pleasure. For nothing is wont so to cause pleasure as a good conscience.

Therefore Paul indeed, though wounded every day, rejoiced and exulted; but the men of this day, although they endure not a shadow even of what he did, grieve and make lamentations from no other cause than that they have not a mind full of heavenly philosophy. For, tell me, wherefore the lamentation? Because thou art poor, and in want of necessaries? Surely for this thou oughtest rather to make lamentation, [not] because thou weepst, not because thou art poor, but because thou art mean-spirited; not because thou hast not money, but because thou prizest money so highly. Paul died daily, yet wept not but even rejoiced; he fought with continual hunger, yet grieved not but even gloried in it. And dost thou, because for his own needs, but for the whole world's. And thou indeed [hast to care] for one household, but he for those so many poor at Jerusalem, for those in Macedonia, for those everywhere in poverty, for those who give to them no less than for those who receive. For his care for the world was of a twofold nature, both that they might not be destitute of necessaries, and that they might be rich in spiritual things. And thy famishing children distress not thee so much as all the concerns of the faithful did him. Why do I say, of the faithful? For neither was he free from care for the unfaithful, but was so eaten up with it that he wished even to become accursed for their sakes; but thou, were a famine to rage ten thousand times over, wouldest never choose to die for any whomsoever. And thou indeed carest for one woman, but he for the Churches throughout the world. For he saith, "My anxiety for all the Churches." (ch. xi. 28.) How long then, O man, dost thou trifle, comparing thyself with Paul; and wilt not cease from this thy much meanness of spirit? For it behoveth to weep, not when we are in poverty but when we sin; for this is worthy of lamentations, as all the other things are of ridicule even. 'But,' he saith, 'this is not all that grieves me; but that also such an one is in power, whilst I am unhonored and outcast.' And what is this? for the blessed Paul too appeared to the many to be unhonored and an outcast. 'But,' saith he, 'he was Paul.' Plainly then not the nature of the things, but thy feebleness of spirit case thy desponding. Lament not therefore thy poverty, but thyself who art so minded, yea rather, lament not thyself, but reform thee; and seek not for money, but pursue that which maketh men of more cheerful countenance than thousands of money, philosophy, and virtue. For where indeed these are, there is no harm in poverty; and where these are not there is no good in money. For tell me, what good is it when men are rich indeed, but have beggarly souls? Thou dost not bewail thyself, so much as that rich man himself, because he hath not the wealth of all. And if he doth not weep as thou dost, yet lay open his conscience, and thou wilt see his wailings and lamentation,

Wilt thou that I show thee thine own riches, that thou mayest cease to count them happy that are rich in money? Seest thou this heaven here, the sun, this bright and far shining star, and that gladdeneth our eyes, is not this too set out common to all? And do not all enjoy it equally, both poor and rich? And the wreath of the stars and the orb of the moon, are they not left equally to all? Yea, rather, if I must speak

somewhat marvellous, we poor enjoy these more than they. For they indeed being for the most part steeped in drunkenness, and passing their time in revellings and deep sleep, do not even perceive these things, being always under cover and reared in the shade: but the poor do more than any enjoy the luxury of these elements. And further, if thou wilt look into the air which is every where diffused, thou wilt see the poor man enjoying it in greater both freshness and abundance. For wayfarers and husbandmen enjoy these luxuries more than the inhabitants of the city; and again, of those same inhabitants of the city, the handicraftsmen more than those who are drunken all the day. What too of the earth, is not this left common to all? 'No,' he saith. How sayest thou so? Tell me. 'Because the rich man, even in the city, having gotten himself several plethra, raises up long fences round them; and in the country cuts off for himself many potions' What then? When he cuts them off, does he alone enjoy them? By no means, though he should contend for it ever so earnestly. For the produce he is compelled to distribute amongst all, and for thee he cultivates grain, and wine, and oil, and every where ministers unto thee. And those long fences and buildings, after his untold expense and his toils and drudgery he is preparing for thy use, receiving from thee only a small piece of silver for so great a service. And in baths and every where, one may see the same thing obtaining; the rich of it all with perfect ease. And his enjoyment of the earth is no more than thine; for sure he filleth not ten stomachs, and thou only one. 'But he partaketh of costlier meats? 'Truly, this is no mighty superiority; howbeit, even here, we shall find thee to have the advantage. For this costliness is therefore thought by thee a matter of envy because the pleasure with it is greater. Yet this is greater in the poor man's case; yet not pleasure only, but health also; and in this alone is the advantage with the rich, that he maketh his constitution feebler and collects more abundant fountains of disease. For the poor man's diet is all ordered according to nature, but his through its excess resulteth in corruption and disease.

But if ye will, let us also look at this same thing in an example. For if it were requisite to light a furnace, and then one man were to throw in silken garments and fine linens, many and numberless, and so kindle it; and another logs of oak and pine, what advantage would this man have over that? None, but even disadvantage. But what? (for there is nothing to prevent our turning the same illustration round after another manner,) if one were to throw in logs, and another were to light his fire under bodies, by which furnace wouldest thou like to stand, that with the logs, or that with the bodies? Very plainly that with the logs. For that burns naturally and is a pleasant spectacle to the beholders: whilst this with the steam, and juices, and smoke, and the stench of the bones would drive every one away. Didst thou shudder at the hearing, and loathe that furnace? Like it are the bellies of the rich. For in them one would find more rottenness than in that furnace, and stinking vapors, and filthy humors, because that, all over in every part, indigestion abounds in consequence of their surfeiting. For the natural heat not sufficing for the digestion of the whole but being smothered under them, they lie smoking above, and the unpleasantness produced is great. To what then should one compare those stomachs of theirs? Yet do not be offended at what I say, but if I do not say true things, refute me. To what then should one compare them? For even what has been said is not enough to show their wretched plight. I have found another resemblance yet. What then is it? As in the sewers where there is accumulation of refuse, of drug, hay, stubble, stones, clay, frequent stoppages occur; and then the stream of filth overflows at top: so also it happeneth with the stomachs of those people. For these being stopped up below, the greater part of these villainous streams spurts up above. But not so with the poor, but like those fountains which well forth pure streams, and water gardens and pleasure grounds, so also are their stomachs pure from such-like superfluities. But not such are the stomachs of the rich, or rather of the luxurious; but they are filled with humors, phlegm, bile, corrupted blood, putrid rheums, and other suchlike matters. Wherefore no one, if he lives always in luxury, can bear it even for a short time; but his life will be spent in continual sicknesses. Wherefore I would gladly ask them, for what end are meats given? That we may be destroyed, or be nourished? That we may be diseased, or be strong? That we may be healthful, or be sickly? Very plainly, for nourishment, creating unto the body disease and sickness? But not so the poor man; on the contrary, by

his plain diet he purchases to himself health, and vigor, and strength. Weep not then on account of poverty, the mother of health, but even exult in it; and if thou wouldest be rich, despise riches. For this, not the having money but the not wanting to have it, is truly affluence. If we can achieve this, we shall both be here more affluent than all that are rich, and there shall obtain the good things to come, whereunto may all we attain, through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father, with the Holy Ghost, be glory, might, honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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Pope Saint Gregory the Great – 1st Sunday of Lent
Excerpt from Book VIII of the Moralia

And so the life of man is in such a way ‘a trial,’ that though we are henceforth restrained from the commission of sin, yet in our very good works themselves we are clouded now by the recollection of evil deeds, now by the mists of self-deception [*seductionis*], now by the suspension of our own purpose of mind. Thus one man henceforth restrains the flesh from excess, and yet he is still subject to images thereof, in that the things, which he has done willingly, come to mind against his will, and what he accounted pleasure he bears as punishment. But because he fears to be drawn again into the conquered evil habit, he restrains his greedy appetite by the forcible means of a singular abstinence, and by his abstinence his face is rendered pale; then when paleness is observed in his countenance, his life is commended as deserving of the reverential regard of his fellow-creatures, and presently with the words of commendation vainglory enters into the mind of this man of abstinence, which while the mind having received a shock cannot get the better of, it seeks to blot from the face the paleness whereby that entered in, and so it comes to pass that being tied fast with the knots of infirmity, either in avoiding the paleness of abstinence, it again dreads to be brought under the dominion of excess, by food, or subduing by abstinence the impulse to excess, it apprehends its paleness serving to vainglory. Another man getting the better of the downfall of pride, henceforth lays hold of the state of humility with all the desire of his heart, and when he sees people that are full of pride breaking out so far as to the oppressing of the innocent, being inflamed by the incitement of zeal, he is forced to lay aside in some degree the thing he determined on, he displays the force of the side of right, and withstands the evil-minded not with mildness, but with authority. Whence it is very commonly the case, that either by pursuit of humility he is led to abandon zeal for the right, or again by zeal for right he interrupts the pursuit of humility, which he maintained. And when the authoritativeness of zeal and lowliness of purpose scarcely admit of being preserved together, the man is made a stranger to himself in his embarrassment. So that he is in a great dilemma lest in a deluded mind either pride pass itself off for the high tone of zeal, or timid inactivity feign itself humility. Another man, considering how great is the sin of deceit, determines to fortify himself in the citadel of truth, so that henceforth no false word should proceed out of his lips, and that he should wholly cut himself off from the sin of lying. But it very frequently happens that, when the truth is spoken, the life of a neighbour is borne hard upon; and whilst the person fears to bring injury upon another, he is brought back, as in an aim of pity, to that evil habit of deceit which he had for long kept under; and so it comes to pass, that though wickedness has no place in his mind, yet the shadow of falsehood dims therein the rays of truth. And hence oftentimes, because when a man is urged with questions he cannot keep silence, either by telling a falsehood he slays his own soul, or by speaking the truth bears hard upon the life of a neighbour. Another man, incited by the love of his Maker, aims by unintermitted prayer to withhold his mind from all earthly thoughts, and to place it in safety in the secret deeps of inward repose; but in the very mounting of his prayer, whilst he is striving to ascend from things below, he is struck back by the vision of them, and the eye of the mind is stretched to gaze on the light, but from bodily habit it is dimmed by the images of earthly things arising. Whence it very often comes to pass, that the mind of the

person so striving, being exhausted by its own weakness, either giving over prayer, is lulled asleep in sloth, or if it continue long in prayer, the mist of rising images gathers thick before its eyes.

And so it is well said, *The life of man is a trial upon earth*, since there also he met with the guiltiness of a downward course, where he thought to lay hold on the advancement of an upward one, and the mind is only thrown into disorder by the same act whereby it strove to arise out of its disorder, so that it is thrown back upon itself shivered by the very means, by which it was already getting above itself collected and compacted. This man being a stranger to instruction in the Divine Law, is kept down by his ignorance, that he should do nothing for the attaining of salvation. That man being endued with the knowledge of the Divine Law, while he is delighted that understanding is vouchsafed to him beyond other men, in that he exults with a selfish delight, wastes in himself the gift of understanding which he has received. And in the Judgment he is shewn to light worse than others by the same thing, whereby he is exhibited brighter than others for a season. The first, because he is lifted high by no gifts of extraordinary powers, eschews the more plain path of uprightness too, and as if accounting himself an alien to the heavenly benefit, does evil things as though with more security, in proportion as he has never been vouchsafed the high endowments of the heavenly gift. The other the spirit of Prophecy replenishes, uplifts to the foreknowledge of events, and shews him things to come as now present. But whilst oftentimes and in many cases he is lifted above himself, so that he does really contemplate future events, his mind being drawn off into self-confidence, fancies that that spirit of Prophecy, which cannot always be had, is always with him, and when he takes every notion that he may have for prophecy, because that he ascribes this to himself even when he has nothing of it, he even loses it in the degree that he might possess it. And so it comes to pass, that he is brought back in sorrow behind the standard of other men's merits by the very means, whereby he was advanced before it in gladness of heart in the esteem of all. And so, *The life of man is a trial upon earth*, in that either being a stranger to extraordinary powers, it is unable to mount to the heavenly prize, or enriched with spiritual gifts, it is one day ruined the worse by occasion of its extraordinary powers.

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