

the precise character and form of the terrible conflict of those forty days and forty nights. But by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and having a due regard to the different accounts of the three evangelists, we may, perhaps, form a reasonable conjecture of the *general* character of the protracted conflict, while we are careful not to dogmatize or to invent details.

We may, in the first place, take it for granted that while Jesus was powerfully or irresistibly led into the wilderness *to be tempted* of the devil, this could not have been the *end He had in view* in going into the wilderness. He could not have been led into the wilderness by the *felt desire* or *consciously formed purpose of being tempted*. Such a purpose would have been wrong in Him, as it would be in us. He must have had *another and very different* end in view, while the Spirit was so leading Him, that His wilderness experience would be such as He was fully prepared for, but not such as He sought in retiring for a season.

In the second place, we think it may be as readily taken for granted that the end which Jesus *actually had in view*, in retiring into the wilderness, was *meditation and prayer, in the prospect of the actual commencement of His public work*. But as it so often happens with the Christian believer, that when he retires in the hope of spending a pleasant and profitable season in meditation and prayer his whole exercise proves a most trying spiritual conflict ; so Jesus, retiring into the wilderness to hold communion with His God and Father in meditation and prayer, found His great enemy let loose upon Him, and passed the whole time in doing battle with him.

It is said in Mark that He "was with the wild beasts." Can this mean anything but that Satan attempted to terrify Him? And what can be more reasonable than to suppose that Satan should first of all assail Him, in the way of attempting to *intimidate* Him hoping to deter Him from His work by presenting it in its darkest and most discouraging aspects? Every thoughtful Christian will admit that the position and circumstances and the prospects of Jesus were now as great a contrast to those of our first parents as could well be conceived. Placed in a pleasant *paradise*, the sweetest spot on earth, which, yet uncursed, was all a paradise ; and having no prospect before them but that of happiness, never to differ from the present, save in its increase and security, there was nothing on which to ground an appeal to