

forth all his power against his dreaded adversary. That time had now arrived.

Jesus being now fully furnished for the work before Him, by the "Holy Ghost given him without measure," John iii. 34, Satan was, we may say, let loose upon Him. All restraints being withdrawn, he lost no time in making trial of strength, *i.e.*, of *subtility*, Gen. iii. 1, with his great adversary. It is instructive to note that, as in other cases, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the letting loose of Satan were *cotemporaneous*; and a comparison of the different terms in which the great temptation is related by the evangelists is very suggestive and impressive. Luke says, "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Mark intimates that His going into the wilderness "immediately" followed the descent of the Spirit, and says the Spirit *drove* Him, the word implying that He acted under a powerful, or, perhaps we should say, irresistible divine impulse. And Matthew begins his narrative in terms which intimate that the *very end* of His being thus powerfully and irresistibly led into the wilderness was that He might be tempted of the devil. This temptation lasted forty days, Luke expressly stating that He was "forty days tempted of the devil," and Mark, that "he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of the devil." Matthew and Luke agree in saying that all that time he was without food; the former that He "fasted forty days and forty nights," and the latter that "in those days he did eat nothing." At the termination of this period, His bodily wants, which, during its whole continuance, had doubtless been forgotten or unfelt, owing, we may assume, to the *intensity of the spiritual conflict* through which he was passing, asserted their power, and were the occasion of another temptation, or succession of temptations, recorded in detail by Matthew and Luke.

A comparison of the different accounts makes it all but certain that Satan did not make his presence known to our Lord, or did not present himself to Him *as a person*, till the end of the forty days. Though the whole temptation was his work, he being the prime mover and the chief or only agent in it, he was, all the while, an *unseen* agent working by the instrumentalities that are at his disposal, in his assaults on the human Spirit. We cannot certainly know, because we are not expressly informed