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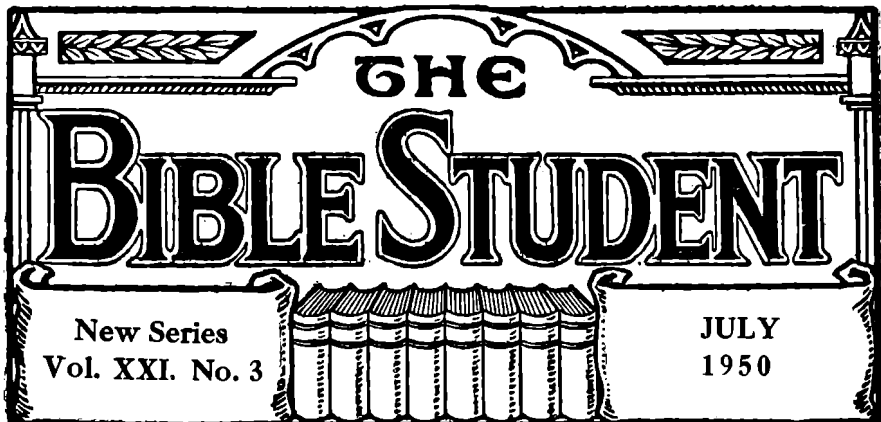
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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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# THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST

BY R. H. C. HILL

Discovery of the most terrible explosive force in the universe is forcing the formation of a Super-State embracing the whole world. The ultimate hope of One-World or Cosmopolis, was cherished by the Greeks even before the Christian era. The Scriptures told of it as a thing of horror earlier than the Greeks. The Scriptures also delineated the Monster who will make the attempt at World Dominion and almost succeed.

A recent book, said to be one of the most remarkable of our day, describes the tyranny that may overtake the world in thirty-five years unless people wake up and resist the forces attempting to bring it about. The book depicts a Dictator, fiendishly clever and oppressive; and present-day threats against human freedom are here seen carried to their ultimate conclusion. Reviewers of the book say its ruthless logic is likely to be overlooked so realistic are the horrifying details of such an eventuality.

When a Left-Wing non-believer can thus read the trends and tokens of the day and foresee their course it is time believers pay attention to the sure word of prophecy that so clearly indicates these things must shortly come to pass. Satan has a kingdom and will set up his own king. But God has a King with a greater Kingdom that knows no ending, benign and universal, whose portrait and power have already been drawn in the BOOK.

In the light of these considerations Christ's temptations in the wilderness may be seen as applying to Satan's attempt at *that time*, to anticipate and frustrate the establishment of the Kingdom of GOD. Let us briefly study these temptations afresh in this light.

First let it be stated, they were *real* temptations. It is so stated in Scripture. The Christ of God had accepted limitations in becoming Man. He was tempted to transgress those limits. There was no sin in the temptation. There was no sin in the temptation in Eden. Sin began when Eve yielded to the temptation. There was no sin in the fiercer temptation in the wilderness and the same Tempter was at work. Sin lay not in being tempted; and not for an instant was the temptation able to elicit from Christ the slightest desire for what was proffered. •

The temptations were climacteric. They in turn follow the previous Forty Days onslaught. Prior to those forty days as boy,

youth and man He had been tempted in all points as we are. The One tempted in the wilderness is the Christ of God anointed for His public ministry and now standing on the threshold thereof. The Christ of God was both Man and God but not half of each—not the “God-Man”—not two persons. The Word became flesh. In that Manhood the temptation took place. In becoming Man He accepted humanity’s limitations not connected with sin. God cannot be tempted for there are no limits He could transgress, being infinite. The Manhood of Christ was provisionally finite. It could be tempted and was.

The heavens had just rung with His praise for His thirty years of God-pleasing perfection. Now the intensified testing of that perfection came. After six weeks of fasting and sustaining constant Satanic attack, the final phase of the assault begins. The physical effects of that fasting must have been great. Men have fasted scientifically and under controlled conditions and survived, but barely. Moses fasted forty days and returned from the presence of God with glowing countenance. This was different. Emaciated, weakened, amid the lairs of wild beasts, assaulted by Satan as the “roaring lion”, no matter what form he took for the present purpose, He who was later to be wearied at Jacob’s well was now wearied, wasted and weakened. “Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life,” argues Satan. Hunger wastes powers of soul as well as of body. Driven by pangs of hunger even high souls have committed dastardly crimes. Surely this is the moment, thought Satan, for an irresistible temptation. “IF thou *art* the Son of God, command . . .”, said Satan. He answered, “Man . . .”. He was not here to command but to obey His Father. That word “Man” linked Him to all mankind. Man is dependent on every Word of God and so would He be. Not by making bread but by being obedient would He become the Bread of God for a perishing world.

It was as Man that He suffered being tempted. “He had incorporated Himself with human nature. Satan’s temptation would . . . detach Him from it again, and thereby destroy His *mediatorial nature* through something that for it would have been sin.” (Stier)

Satan’s suggestion to the Incarnate Word was, “Speak the word only and make these stones bread.” He did not argue with Satan nor attack him. The victory lay in the fact that Satan’s suggestion failed to elicit the slightest response or desire. Later

on, at the request, "Speak the word only"—He would speak the word and one grievously tormented with palsy would live (Matt. 8:8, 13). Receiving the commandment from His Father He performed the miracle on that occasion. He did so without stepping out of His relationship to the Father as Son learning obedience and as a Servant. Without stepping out of that relationship He could not make stones into bread. He had received no commandment from His Father to do so nor did He later. Instead angels came and brought Him food as they had done to Elijah.

It was as Man He had been tempted and as Man He stood. The temptation concerned His relation to God. In that relationship He was perfect.

Thus far we have been on familiar ground, but we trust without familiarity, for it is holy ground. The actual temptation to make bread has been in view. But may we not proceed further? May not the temptation be considered as involving more than a relationship between Christ and God at that time? We believe it may and claim no originality for the suggestion. It is not new, but never before in history have events revealed Satan's ultimate purpose as at present; and in their lurid light we may see his previous attempts to accomplish them by bringing Christ under his power in the wilderness temptations.

More than a hundred years ago a German writer suggested a relation between these temptations and Satan's desire for world-rule through a man subservient to him in all things. This one he refers to as "a false Messiah whom carnal Israel, through fellowship with the idolatry of the world had learned to expect. What an earthly-glorious Jewish Messiah would then have been (i.e. had Christ come under Satan's power) Antichrist, the Man of Sin, will in the last days actually exhibit, and with an open rejection of the name of God."

We will glance at the temptations as each part of a whole, and seen in relation to the temptation of Satan that Christ should become that "earthly-glorious" Messiah whom carnal Israel expected and whose rule was to be universal. What the Christ of God then was solicited to become, the Man of Sin will consent to be. As appears in the final temptation, the goal of Satan is *godlessness*: To have God and His worship rejected. He aims to have men reject the fundamental truths underlying all truth: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."

The verse quoted by Christ was spoken in connection with God's discipline in humbling Israel and permitting them to hunger. It was a means of proving them and knowing what was in their heart. Here hunger proved what was in the heart of Christ: that it was filled with devotion to the will of His Father. But hunger is also one of God's ways of chastening people and nations. When Israel refused to say, "Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth us rain . . .", He said, "*Your* iniquities have turned away these things (harvest) and your sins have withholden good things from you." (Jer. 8:24, 25).

In tempting the One destined to rule the kingdoms of the world the temptation to make bread was most subtle. He would thereby take Himself out of the hand of God and by making bread or providing for man's needs, He would take the world out from under the disciplining hand of God. The world ever was and ever will be hungry till He reigns. Was it not a temptation to solve *the economic problem* of the world? Any one who could do *that* would by the world be given whatever he demanded, even to be worshipped as God. Here was a short cut to the Kingdom and a seemingly merciful one. Exert self-will to make food: Prove yourself the Bread of God, and the world will acclaim you Son of God. The Cross need never be. But reject the suggestion, and the world will reject your claims and crucify you as an imposter. It would mean, of course, take advantage of men's necessities to secure advantage over them. That is ever Satan's method and will be mercilessly practised ere long in a One-World manner.

A Messiah who could *feed* the world appealed to the people. Was the temptation not repeated at the feeding of the five thousand? They would have taken Him by force and made Him the earthly-glorious Messiah. Was not that the kind of a Messiah the prophets foretold as having world-dominion? Satan's temptation implied, in this case, that He assume a benign despotism, without tyranny, and that He alleviate the hunger of the world, and by His power to withhold the necessities of life, compel universal submission. Here two considerations may be noted: (1) Apart from control of food no World-Emperor can come to power. (2) The coming World-Emperor will obtain that control over the necessities of life and impose his ruthless tyranny thereby.

The first of these is plainly perceived by the United Nations.

In their aspirations after One-World the United Nations realize that food control is necessary to their plan. Among their many organizations reaching into every department of human life is "The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations".

The second is predicted in Scripture. The Man of Sin, the Antichrist will let no man buy or sell unless he has the 'mark', that is the name or number of the Beast on him (Rev. 13:17). Commenting on this World Ruler, Walter Scott says, "Let it be carefully noted that Satan gives unity and strength to this vast political organization termed the Beast, hence all must belong to it under the pains and penalties of a ruthless ostracism. The necessities of life, obtained by legitimate trading, will be denied those who, in faithfulness to God in this most awful crisis in human history, refuse allegiance to the Beast and his powerful and wily supporter, the Antichrist."

Between the Coming and Kingdom of Christ such a condition will obtain on this poor earth, a condition to be set right when He reigns in righteousness. At His *first coming* there was nothing in Him that could respond to the temptation of the usurper Prince of this world. The Prince of this world found no response in the Man Christ Jesus (John 14:30). The one who *will* accept the bait is aptly described as the "Man of Sin" or the "Lawless One".

2. Then the Devil took Him to the holy city, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge of you,' and, on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

In the first temptation Satan challenged the word spoken from heaven—"This is my beloved Son". The Man Christ Jesus appealed to the written Word of God. Very well, Satan will use the written Word so trusted by Christ in this his second temptation, and quotes from it.

The devil taketh Him to the holy city and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple. Why did He yield so far as to go when led by him? His prayer for His disciples is, "Lead us *not* into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." In His case it was different. It was His Father's will to give Him up to temptation and in that will He found Himself on the pinnacle of the temple. Another translation gives this rendering—"The devil receiveth Him into the Holy City." "He was ready to give Jesus both

the capital of the Jews and the kingdoms of the Gentiles, —on one fell condition” (Ernest Gordon): Satan was willing to receive Him on his own terms where “His own received Him not.”

Again there was no temptation in being placed on the temple. The temptation was that He leap from it and *prove* Himself the Messiah to the assembled multitude of Jews. Satan quotes from the 91st Psalm. It describes the only One who was ever entitled by right to such protection, for He ever “dwelt in the secret place of the Most High” and was “abiding under the shadow of the Almighty”. It was a Psalm peculiarly the right of Messiah to claim. He could claim all its exemptions from the lot of other men. In the previous Psalm Moses could say, “Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place,” but immediately adds, “Thou turnest man to destruction.” Why? For failure and sin and not abiding in the secret place of the Most High. Psalm 91 describes the Man exempt from the wrath of a Holy God against sin and who is secure against Satan’s assaults, for He is the Perfect One. Satan knew Him to be that One who could claim immunity from the sorrows and perils, the common lot of man; he said truly the Psalm was concerning Him. But he did not know that the Son of Man had surrendered the rights accorded to Him even as He surrendered the right to command twelve legions of angels in Galilee. He said, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matt. 26:53, Revised Standard Ver.). If He asked, the Father would send. He would not ask contrary to the Father’s will. Yea, on the Cross, not with His eyes did He behold the reward of the wicked, He *experienced it*. The Psalm also said, “He shall call and I will answer.” Yet He’ cried, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” He did not ask for deliverance. He was “delivered up for us all”, for He offered Himself without spot to God.

Here was Mystery unfathomed by Satan—the great “Mystery of Godliness”. It was no mystery that He was predicted to bruise the head of Satan and reign as King. The Mystery, and how deep it is—concerns the human abasement and self-renunciation of the Son of God.

This temptation was related to Him as Messiah and therefore in relation to Israel. It was a temptation to win instant acceptance of Himself by the whole populace but it was instantly thrust



aside. Perhaps the chief priests and scribes would have accepted Him as their Messiah and He would not have been despised and rejected of men. The Jews would then escape the awful doom they would earn by that rejection. So Satan may have thought, also suggesting the way to avoid having to say—"I came not to bring peace but a sword"; for all would accept Him without the cruel separations inevitable when some would reject Him and others accept Him. It might have made easier the kind of a "Kingdom" so many are bent on establishing *now*, based on brotherliness and social uplift, all sweetness and light.

A kingdom with Himself as Messiah introduced dramatically by miracle, compelling acceptance of His claims but leaving out the *sin question* and its solution by the Cross, may be considered as cunningly involved in this temptation. The "Abomination of Desolation", sitting on the pinnacle of the temple would greedily grasp at what was offered but not that Holy One. He came as Messiah and thus sustained a relation to Israel. In that character, and in that relationship He was proven perfect. He would be the sin-bearing Messiah and would "win the mead and crown by being trampled down," not by throwing Himself from the pinnacle at Satan's suggestion.

Perhaps in the guise of a friendly stranger Satan appeared in the wilderness as one who had been at the baptism and knew what had taken place then. In a friendly consideration for the weakened Man his suggestion was—"You *have* trusted far enough. Surely there is no harm in making a loaf out of a stone and thus save Thyself for the great work before Thee."

In what form we know not the Tempter now stood at His side on the temple and reversed his former method: Now the whispered temptation is "You *fear* to trust God far enough—cast yourself down!" Neither method had the slightest effect. His trust in His Father was perfect, He would not do less than fully believe and could not do more.

3. "Again the Devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to Him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.' Then the Devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

In whatever form the Devil appeared before in this temptation

there is now no disguise on his part and the Overcomer calls him by name.

The god of this world brazenly makes his bid for worship by the Son of Man who is destined "to rule from shore to shore". As Son of Man and in relation to the world He is here tempted. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The temptation would have Him go directly to the throne and avoid the Cross. The temptation would recur and be echoed by Peter saying about the Cross—"God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" And He would reply, "Get behind me, Satan! you are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Matt. 16: 22-23. Rev. Standard Ver.).

The suggestion of Satan was that He take at that time and from his hands the Dictatorship of the world: It implied that He could solve all its problems, economic and religious and the latter without the fanaticism and partisanship that otherwise would develop. But over what kind of a world could he offer this supremacy? Over a world of men living by bread alone, satisfied with a materialistic idealism. Over a world abandoned to the worship of man, the reverse side of which is hatred of God. Over a world dominated by Satan, the individuals and nations subdued by the control of the necessities of life, subjugated to the worship of the State Church and its god and all nations controlled by despotic power ruthlessly exercised. Such a world is in the making now!

The tempted Son of Man was perfect under temptation in His relation to the world *first* of all as its *Saviour*. Having accomplished that undertaking He qualified for being a *Righteous Ruler* over the world He died to save. When He comes as Son of Man in great glory it will be to receive worship as the Jehovah God by men and angels. Then will He destroy that Wicked One who will greedily snatch at the three powers offered by Satan. For failing to make the Lord Christ his tool Satan must perforce provide himself with a man of his own choice to attempt the accomplishment of his purpose. This production of his will be a monstrosity of evil, the "Man of Sin". He will not hesitate to become the head of the world federation nor to worship Satan. He will enforce the worship by cutting off the necessities of life (Rev. 13:4). This will be necessary after his true character is made plain.

This one is called Anti-Christ but that does not imply he is

an imitation of Christ but rather Satan's substitute for the true Christ. Satan's Christ has no pretended relation to God and so will be accepted to a *Godless* system of things that glorifies man as the real god. The substitute Christ will be one "who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship" (2 Thess. 2:4. Rev. Standard). Satan's attempt with the Lord Jesus Christ was to get Him to act independently of God and be the head of a painlessly established kingdom with the sin question ignored. A Christ after this fashion would have met all humanity's hopes and needs *except* the spiritual ones, the most vital of all. He would have been acceptable to the earthly minded of His day and would have been in accordance with the materialistic idealism so prominent in our own day. This does not mean the people were irreligious in His day nor that they will be in the day when He comes to take the Kingdom. In His day the people were most religious and a Messiah fulfilling the conditions Satan proposed would have been received by them as a product of humanity but deserving of Divine honour. In like manner the Anti-Christ, showing himself that he is God—humanity deified—will be accepted by the people as the fulfiller of their conception of the Kingdom of God.

The U.N. represents the current attempt to achieve one world, and it has never acknowledged the existence of a higher power. No prayer has ever been offered in its sessions. In its new headquarters, now being built, there is a small room for a "prayer room" set apart in a huge project that covers six city blocks. There is not a single Christian mark about the room. But any who wish to invoke their god is at liberty to use the room for the purpose. Hindus and Mohammedans conceivably may go there to pray, but not to the God whose Kingdom is to come. There is no suggestion of such a Kingdom to come. Even in ecclesiasticism the hope and conviction of a world-religion acceptable to all is expressed. Canon Raven in a recent book expresses it thus: "That a unifying ideal, that is a world-wide religion of some kind is essential, would be difficult to dispute."

Is it not to be expected, therefore, that there must be a purifying of the world by judgment ere the Kingdom comes? This the Old and New Testament alike teach.

The kingdoms of this world will be offered to the Christ of God but not to include them in a Kingdom that is to be set up apart from judgment. The time may be very near when God

shall say: "Ask of me and I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost part of the world for thine inheritance." But for what will He take those kingdoms? "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Psa. 2:8-9.

This sort of teaching is rejected by many because it is pessimistic. But former enthusiasts for the bright new day thought to be dawning for the world have themselves become pessimistic about the future with none of the optimism of the believer. The believer in Christ sees the glorious possibilities in the regeneration of the individual through the Gospel of God. Such are born again and are not to be associated with things on the earth even in the Millenium. They shall reign with Christ *over* the earth. True believers are optimistic because they look for a Golden Age yet to be experienced by the earth. They look for a reign of righteousness. But they see from Scripture that the birth pangs of the new age are to be the death pangs of the present age. The next event in this world's career is to be the purifying judgment. Many see the portents for they are obvious. Even such an unbeliever as Harry Emerson Fosdick can say: "The bomb on Hiroshima woke us up to the fact that perhaps we have very little time. The hour is growing late." Books have been written with titles such as: "There will be no Time", and "While Time Remains".

Is the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ warned of the days when the Man of Sin shall be manifested? No, he is not. Then why should he be concerned about this coming Monstrosity of evil? He is not warned about his person but he is warned against the conditions that are to prevail as *preparation for the coming* of this Man of Sin. Many consider us well on in the preparatory stage for that manifestation but we look for the Saviour, the Lord from heaven. It is true the night is far spent. That day is at hand. Nearer still the looked-for promise of His coming for His own.