Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

249 To Tempt (*Temptare*)

To tempt. “Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted, [Matt. 4:1].

¶ There are three who tempt, God, the demon, and man. God always tempts to the good, the demon always to evil, man sometimes to the good, sometimes to the evil. Again, God tempts to assess, Psal. [25:2]: “Prove me, O Lord, and try me. The demon tempts so that he may deceive. Wherefore in Acts [5:3]: “Why has Satan tempted your heart.” Man tempts that he may investigate. Wherefore in Dan. [:12]: “Try, I beseech you, your servants for ten days.

¶ Therefore the demon tempts for diverse causes, because for gluttony, for boasting. In diverse places, in the desert, in the temple, on the mountain. By diverse ways, because by suggesting, as there [Matt. 4:3]: “Command that these stones be made bread.” By making known, there [Matt. 4:6]: “It is written, that he has given his angels,” that is God, “charge over you.” By promising there [Matt. 4:9]: “All these will I give you, if falling down you will adore me.” But in all these the demon was defeated. Certainly not by subtlety of power, but by the authority of the scripture, so that thus when we are tempted, we return to the counsel of the scriptures in which we find a mirror which we will admire the example which will change us.

¶ Concerning this temptation we must consider seven things, namely, person, place, time, cause, measure, order, and end.

¶ Concerning the first there shines here a double person, namely, the one tempting and the

one tempted. Certainly, that tempter is malignant, practiced, and astute and this from subtlety of

nature since ancient times. From astuteness of deceiving. A bird catcher seeing that black hairs are much evident too often

/fol. 307rb/

makes his snare out of white hairs. So, the devil. Perpetrating carnal sins that one is easily caught. So, he suggests spiritual things. Here this one tempts not as a man, but as God and savior. Therefore, the sinner takes precautions when he is tempted. The savior himself did not entirely confide justly when he was tempted that he was God himself. But no one perishes because God tempts him. That he may inform us and teach us to overcome.

Concerning the second, we must note the double place, namely, solitary and busy, because not in the marketplace but in the desert, not in the crossroads but in the temple, not in the humble valley but in the high mountain. Not thus therefore as a more secure monk in his cloister nor an anchoress in her hermitage. When now Adam was tempted in paradise, Jesus in the desert.

¶ Concerning the third note that Jesus was tempted not after a meal, but after fasting, not after sin, but after baptism, because the devil sweats more to deceive the clean than the unclean. And when one is converted from error to strength, from vices to virtue, he tolerated the fight more, for “the demon trusts that the Jordan may run into his mouth, [Job 40:18]. The example concerning the sons of Israel who after their exit from Egypt they were more heavily attacked by the Amalechites. Therefore, the wise man counsels, [Eccli. 2:1]: “Son, when you come to the service of God, prepare your soul for temptation.” For everywhere there is a trick from which no person is excepted, no place is excluded, no time is set apart. For truly temptation “is the life of man upon earth,” Job [7:1] where the demons fight against man, man, the world, and the flesh. The demon with vices, man with beasts, the world with the elements, the flesh with the senses. Therefore, the Apostle calls to the Rom. [7:24]: “Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me,”

etc.

¶ Concerning the fourth note the cause of power from which one fasts and the cause of infirmity on account of which one is hungry which certainly is an ideal cause which the enemy assumes for tempting. Therefore, brothers, we guard against the astuteness of the enemy. Lest per chance through too much appetite for eating we are drawn to the fault just as happened to Esau because not only in various dishes and lentils, but in the anticipated hour and immoderate appetite it was sinned. Wherefore this tempter did not say, [Matt. 4:3]: “Command that these stones be made flesh but bread.”

/fol. 307va/

They deal with this who search out various tastes convert substance into acts in nature, in art, to provoke and revoke the appetite.

¶ Here therefore note that when the enemy tempts concerning a corporal vice, that is, concerning gluttony he does not have more power. He tempted concerning spiritual vice, that is, concerning boasting and avarice. But Christ against gluttony offers the virtue of the mind saying, [Deut. 8:3]: “Not in bread alone does man live,” etc. Because against avarice, which is servitude, he offers the service of God to himself, [Deut. 6:13]: “You shall serve him only,” that is, the cult of worship. Against boasting he offers humility saying, [Deut. 6:16]: “You shall not tempt the Lord your God,” that by a desire for marvelous signs. And in this kind of temptation the devil takes him not by random verses but in the holy city.

¶ For there are two things about which men are accustomed to boast for themselves, dignity and knowledge. Teachers about their knowledge, priests about their dignity. Therefore, the enemy set Christ above the pinnacle which was the place more properly of teachers and priests. Because of this the enemy did not tempt concerning boasting in the desert place, but in an infected place. Where human approval is accustomed to being sought, that is, in the holy city.

¶ Concerning the fifth we address the mode of temptation according to the quality of nature because when one has fasted forty days and forty nights, etc.

¶ Concerning the sixth as far as the order of tempting we must note that first he tempted for gluttony after for boasting and finally for avarice.

¶ Concerning the seventh we may note that after the withdrawal of the evil spirits good spirits were ministering to him in which we are instructed that we also if we conquer the hostile temptation divine assistance will be present.