

The Temptation

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THE TEMPTATION

IN

THE DESERT:

LESSONS FROM

CHRIST'S CONFLICT AND VICTORY.

BY REV. A. F. DICKSON.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
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PREFACE.

THE writer of this little volume, in offering it to the beloved disciples of the Lord, finds it necessary to say that he has had access to very few works which treat of its subject, whether standard or recent. Neither did it enter into his plan to make a compend of other men's views, but to draw upon his personal and pastoral experience for such application of the inexhaustible lessons of the Word as seemed needful and wholesome at the present time.

This summary indication of his plan would be all of this Preface, but for the fact that brethren good and true are found to object to such uses of Christ's life as are here attempted, on the ground that his divine nature and his mediatorial office alike remove him too far from us to allow of his being an example for us. And many intelligent and thoughtful minds find an insurmountable difficulty in conceiving how the God-man can have so far occupied our position as to furnish us a model, whereon to shape our lives, even in part.

The author does not flatter himself that he

can entirely remove this difficulty, which is, indeed, to a certain extent, inherent in the subject, but submits the following remarks as abating in some measure the force of the objection.

1. It is not necessary, in order to one's being an example, that he should be nothing else but an example. A general can set an example to his army without becoming a private soldier. A father can set an example to his children without ceasing to be a father. Indeed, he can do so in the very act of executing an office which is high above their heads. He can be true and just in his paternal office, and thus lead them to justice and veracity, though they have no commands to give and no rewards or penalties to dispense.

2. It is not necessary that the same measure of ability should be possessed by the leader and his followers. The skill of the artisan, the knowledge of the teacher, are surely no *bar* to their acting as exemplars. What is needful is, that they do the right thing in the right way, and on the right principles.

3. The two reflections above seem logically to end the argument ; for if Christ's superiority in nature, office, and power do not disable him from being our example, there should be no hesitation in taking in their literal sense those Scriptures which declare that he was so.

4. It is agreed by all evangelical Christians that the incarnation was not an interpenetration of two natures so infinitely unlike as the divine and the human, but only a union at such points of contact as would establish a common personality. To limit ourselves, upon this deep-shrouded and mysterious subject, to the one point where Christ has declared the fact, we have the word of Jesus for it, that there was something he did not know, (Mark 13 : 32,) which the Deity within him certainly did know.

5. It will hardly be doubted that the *appearance* of union between these natures might have been carried much farther than it was ; that it was in fact very gradually developed to the view ; and that this gradual manifestation was a part of the Father's purpose from the first. But if this be granted, we are at liberty reverently to inquire why the man Christ Jesus was so long exhibited to us under the conditions of a human life. And the Scriptures clearly teach that among other and very different reasons was this also : He left us an example, that we should follow in his steps.

6. If it should be objected that the sole and sufficient reason for his being thus exhibited was that humiliation was appointed him as the method of his work, the answer is easy : the

whole plan of salvation was grounded upon the laws of man's being, and made to touch him in every point of his needs. Therefore the humiliation, which was a necessary element in the atonement, was so shaped as to meet this other requisition, and mark out the path of man with the footprints of his Saviour.

7. In truth, one is tempted to protest warmly and sorrowfully against this sweeping away of the ideal man from the gospel, or covering him from sight with his robes of office.

"Thou, O Christ, art *all* I want," includes the showing us what to be, as well as the removal of the ban of a broken law, and breaking the dreadful entail of corruption.

How can we say that he is *all* we want, if one of the most pressing of all our needs, which he surely could have met, is left unsupplied? If we were remitted to our vain fancies for an image of a perfectly sanctified man, let the present state of eccentric opinion, arisen despite the portraiture of the gospels, reveal to us how wild and hopelessly variant our standards would be.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

THE TEMPTATION

IN

THE DESERT.

GENERAL VIEW.

ALMOST every fact of the true religion has been counterfeited in some one or more of the false. But that of which I am to treat could not be counterfeited. Who would have dared to invent such a story as that a Divine Redeemer was tempted by the devil forty days? The thing itself, we see, was not impossible, for it actually occurred; but we may safely say that the imagining it was impossible.

How wise, how kind, how needful a fact it was, we may see more clearly as we proceed. In great structures of brick or stone, bars of iron long and strong are often built in, to bind

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securely together the various parts of the mass. I think we shall find this wonderful history such a bar in that great "building of God," the scheme of man's redemption. He who devised it knew the deep foundations, and springing arches, and loftiest spires, as only a builder can know. And He has set this strange, awful, humbling, comforting, precious wonder as a pillar of iron, bedded in the walls, to clamp them together into a glorious whole.

I. THE FAST.

Three fasts of forty days are recorded in the Bible; they were kept by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. There are several remarkable points of likeness, and some points of signal unlikeness.

As to the features in which these facts agree, the most obvious point is the number of days. It would be difficult, and wholly useless, to guess why God chose this particular period, rather than one month, or two, or one and a half. There it is, a month and ten days, each of them lived without bodily food. Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 18. They were alike also,

therefore, in this, that God miraculously sustained them during their fast. For human life could not endure so long an abstinence.

Another point of agreement was that each fast occurred at a critical moment in the life of him who kept it. Moses was on the mount of God, receiving the law, and learning of that God whose minister and champion he was to be. Elijah was flying from the murderous wrath of Jezebel, and seeking release from his painful but glorious office. And Christ was about to begin his public life, and hasten through it to his "baptism of fire."

These fasts also resemble each other in such minor points as these: that they were all kept in desert places, and all in utter solitude as regards human companionship.

I have said that they were also strikingly unlike. For example, Moses was cheered and supported by the sensible and glorious presence of God; Elijah, by the hope of closing his life of toils and storms; but Christ was without either aid. Moses was engaged in the sublimest duty of his life; Elijah was going to meet God at his own command; but Christ

was shut out from every employment but resisting temptation. Moses and Elijah had held their high offices already for many years, while Christ had not yet made trial of his. Nothing is said of their being assailed specially by evil spirits; while Christ was made the target of their cruelest attacks.

And thus it was with our dear Saviour, in respect both of glories and humiliations; "in all things he had the preëminence." None spake, none worked miracles, none loved, none "suffered being tempted," like this man.

II. THE ENEMY.

There is a devil. It is very strange that men should hate that truth, and try to overthrow it as they do, and always have done. But whether they like it or not, there is such a wicked and mighty adversary, if the Bible is worthy of even the least credit.

The book of Genesis, which is the very first to tell us of God and of man, tells us also of Satan, under the name of the serpent. And a very just and suitable name it is. He creeps and coils and strikes with a cunning and a

deadly venom that no other epithet could describe so well.

Then the book of Job describes him—his manner of life, his way of accusing good men, his audacious appearing among the sons of God, (that is, the holy angels,) his cruelty, and his defeat.

Our Lord himself speaks of him and to him, and deals with him in all respects as a reasoning, personal being; as much so as any man that ever came into his presence. All the apostolic writers make mention of him; and the book of Revelation is full of his history. If the Bible is not to be trusted, or if it is to be explained away when it speaks so expressly, how can we know what it means, or what we are commanded or permitted to believe?

Let me show now briefly how strange it is that men should try to doubt the existence of the devil.

If there be no such powerful, wily, ancient enemy of God as Satan is seen to be in the Bible, *then man alone is responsible for the horrible wickedness and misery that are in the world.*

The revelation of a devil is a merciful revelation. It shows that we were "sinned against" before we sinned. Guilty as we were and are, we were betrayed into it. We divide the dreadful responsibility with an earlier and more terrible criminal.

Who can look out upon a world of wars, oppressions, lusts, murder; who can look in upon a world of pride, selfishness, ingratitude, unbelief; who can look back to the sins of his youth, or down into that hell to which innumerable hosts of sinners are descending, and not feel some relief in the remembrance that these horrors did not originate with man? that it was not Adam, but Satan, whom the Saviour called "a murderer from the beginning"? Man's guilt is frightful enough at the best; but the infidel theories that make him the inventor and great first cause of sin, make it but the more frightful. Better far to leave him where God's word leaves him—misled, blinded, hurried into ruin by an ancient and crafty foe; a victim, before he was a conspirator.

And this leads me to add, that the doctrine

of an evil spirit is an essential part of the revelation of redemption. The gospel represents this world as the battlefield on which the contest for man's soul is being fought out. Christ, with the unfallen angels as his ministers, is represented as seeking to deliver "all who are oppressed of the devil;" while he, in his hatred of God and peace, is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Bad men are described as his captives, subjects, children, doomed by him to perdition. Good men are those whom Jesus and the truth have made free.

Now strike out the allegations about Satan, and his power, and his enmity to God, and where are we? The only enemy left for God to deal with—the only being upon whom his justice can be vindicated—the only “vessel of wrath fitted for destruction”—is wretched, wicked man! Deprived of every palliation of his crimes, and personally, as the chief and only offender, challenging the anger of Almighty Justice, how, oh how can he escape?

But take the letter of Scripture on this subject as true, and the very object of Satan's

device, namely, the ruin of man and the dishonor of God, appeals to God to save us. The gospel is God's answer to that appeal. Christ came "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8. Woe to us if the wrath that burns against him were turned on us! In truth, we cannot understand the New Testament at all, if we deny that there is a devil. And they who quarrel with the plain truth here misunderstand it elsewhere.

No doubt there are a great many puzzling questions that may be raised about Satan's tempting Jesus. For example, What form did he assume? If his own, then how could Jesus be tempted by one whom he knew to be the worst of evil spirits? If not his own, what other form could he take without a miracle? Did he fill the mind of Jesus with illusions, and tempt him in a vision? Could a devil have such power over a holy mind? And many more such idle speculations.

I may answer them all at once, by reminding you that *they all grow out of our ignorance.*

We are ignorant, (1) How such spirits exist and act; (2) Whether they have any sort of bodies of their own, or not; (3) How they get access to other spirits, or to our minds. Neither is it of the smallest practical consequence how they are answered, provided we agree that the temptations were real temptations, and the assaults of a real enemy.

If, however, the question be, What was this cruel, wicked angel's *object* in tempting Jesus? the answer is as easy as it is important. It was in some way to break up the alliance between God and "his servant, his elect in whom his soul delighted." If, in any way, and even for a moment, he could have set them against each other, his horrible work would have been done. Jesus would have forfeited his high office, this wretched world would have lost its Saviour, and God would have been robbed of his chosen glory. So much depends upon doing right always.

III. THE BATTLEFIELD.

The place of this momentous and mysterious conflict was the desert on the borders of

This is my desire, well pleased.

the Dead sea. Christ, coming up from the Jordan, was driven immediately by the Spirit into this desolate and awful region. Above, toward the west, are sandhills; then come limestone crags and mountains, sometimes cut into pointed hills of chalky rock, and sometimes long sharp ridges, sloping steeply down toward the Sea of Sodom and Gomorrah. Between these ridges are deep ravines, where no streams of water flow, and where the sun beats down upon the glaring rock with a heat like fire.

The only water, except in the rainy season, is in springs on or near the seashore, or in huge cisterns hewn out of the rock, where the herdsmen of ancient times watched their goats at certain seasons. But vast tracts are without either supply, and were and are "a horrible desert."* The southern extremity is marked by the cave and fountain of En-gedi; the northern, by the plain of Jericho. Through those frightful solitudes, from whose projecting headlands, doubtless, he often looked down upon the Sea of the Curse, or listened

* Robinson's Researches, vol. 1, p. 244.

to the gurgling of the few brooks that, escaping far beneath him, make their way to it, or to the multitudes of birds rejoicing there in the verdure and the pleasant water he was not permitted to approach; through these cruel and lonely regions lay our Saviour's way for those forty days. While the world he came to save slept and feasted, he watched and fasted, and "was with the wild beasts."

But there is another and more important sense of this word *battlefield*. The true place of conflict was not the desert, or the pinnacle of the temple, or the exceeding high mountain. It was the soul of Jesus; his finite, human soul, perplexed and oppressed by the mysteries of his position, and borne down yet more by a suffering and weakened body.

And Satan is just that fierce and treacherous adversary, to whom innocence and loneliness and trouble appeal in vain. They invite his onslaught. That has been his spirit ever since the world was made, and it is his spirit now. Eve's purity in Eden kindled his rage. Jesus' goodness and suffering stirred all his malignity. In a sorer anguish than

this Jesus said, "This is your hour *and the power of darkness.*"

Never dream, because your case is pitiful, and your heart broken, and your eyes a fountain of tears, that Sàtan will pity and spare you, any more than the wolves spare the deer, because the sweat drips down, and his flanks heave, and his tongue hangs dry from his mouth, and the tears roll down his face. No! our weakness and agony cheer him on; and we must fight the battle out, or perish!

Let us lay fast hold of this truth at the outset. The devil hates peace and goodness with a fierce animosity that never spares and never wearies. And the brazen front that dared to assail the Lord Jesus, will certainly not shrink from any treachery, or to palm off any lie on our careless thoughts or distressed feelings, if only we can be ensnared and ruined. Our comfort, our self-respect, our good name, our enjoyment of religion, our ability to do good, are in daily peril from the wiles of the devil; who "sows tares while men sleep," who "is a liar, and the father of it," a "wicked spirit in high places," even "the evil one."

What madness, then, for people who are corrupt by nature and have such an enemy to take advantage of every weakness, and every bad habit and plausible vice, and every passion and appetite they have; people surrounded by so many trying circumstances, so ignorant, so blind, so self-deceived; people, too, whose eternal destiny is to be settled here, and may be settled to their ruin by any one of Satan's "devices," if successful: what madness for them to lead careless lives, and "hope for the best."

IV. REASONS WHY JESUS WAS TEMPTED.

Many persons have been greatly perplexed by the question, Why should a holy person be subjected to such distress and humiliation? And yet—though, as I have said, nobody could have invented it—now we know the temptation occurred, it is easily seen to be a most wise and gracious dispensation.

In the first place, then, Christ hereby *identified himself* with the general state of man as tempted.

It is clear enough that, according to the gospel idea of a mediator, he must be one with those whom he represents. He must share their lot. He must speak in their name. He must have his interests imbedded in theirs. Thus, Moses is called "a mediator." He was a Jew under Egyptian bondage; shared his people's humiliations and dangers; went with them through the sea and through the desert, and under the awful clouds of Horeb. And when Jehovah himself invited him to forsake wilful, base, and treacherous Israel, and be made the father of a happier and better nation, he refused. His heart and his hopes were with his "brethren after the flesh," wicked and miserable as they were.

Thus our gracious Saviour, "the Mediator of a better covenant," that he might be a perfect Mediator, was made one with God by his divine nature and one with us by his human nature. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He was the Son of God, but he was also the Son of man. His whole life on earth was meant to bear that impress—to

stamp and seal him for ever as one of us. He was to be a man, and we were to feel that he was.

But it would have been a grave defect in Moses, as the chief of Israel, if he had floated along, above the people's heads, over the desert, "the waste, howling wilderness," in a pleasant shelter supplied with abundant comforts, while, "hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." And so it would have made a wide and grievous interval between our Lord and man, if he had not been "tempted in all points like as we are."

Another reason for Christ's temptation is, that thus he underwent a marked and signal *probation*. It was evidently a fixed and material part of the plan of mercy, that Christ, taking our place, should be proved perfect in every respect. It was needful to show by actual experiment that a finite being can be altogether good. Men have flattered themselves that man's sinfulness was only the necessary consequence of his finiteness, and thus an inevitable misfortune, rather than a fault. God answers all this folly, as he so often re-

bukes and teaches us, by a fact: Jesus was a man, and Jesus was sinless.

It was necessary to prove his perfectness by trial, because he was to be our sacrifice; and the virtue of the sacrifice depended upon the purity of the victim. All the old types taught this. The lamb for the offering was always to be a male of the first year, and without any blemish or defect or injury whatever. The priests that offered them could in no case be deformed or maimed men, or defective in any bodily organ. Accordingly, we are expressly said to be "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." But to prove this perfect goodness, it must be tried, and to try it Jesus must be tempted.

The same necessity appears again, when we reflect that Christ's successful probation was to be set over against Adam's unsuccessful probation. Adam is plainly called "the first man," and "the Lord from heaven" is called "the second man." The works of the one, and their fruits, are compared with the works of the other and their fruits. And as "the

first man" fell when tempted of the devil, it was necessary that "the second man" should stand under similar and far more terrible assaults. Not that the temptation in the desert was the whole, or even the grandest part, of the probation of Jesus. But it was a signal, vital, and glorious part of it.

A third reason for this wonderful testing of our Lord is, that he thus "*learned obedience* by the things that he suffered."

It is true that the phrase I have just quoted is used by Paul in reference to later and more awful scenes, even the last terrible hours, in the life of Jesus. But they can be properly applied to many periods besides. It is a very remarkable saying this of Paul's, that Jesus "*learned obedience.*" Let us look at it a little.

This cannot mean, of course, that having been disobedient, he now learned to be obedient, for he was "without sin," and disobedience is sin; for "sin is the transgression of the law." This sense of the phrase, therefore, is out of the question.

So also is this other meaning, that having obeyed partially, he now learned to obey

completely. A defective obedience of a perfect law is disobedience.

But one may advance from one kind of obedience to another. Adam, before he was tempted and fell—and thus acquired a “knowledge of good and evil,” that is, of good as compared with evil—Adam had a sinless soul; he enjoyed one kind of sinlessness, namely, innocence—Adam, if (as we all believe) he at last was brought to repentance, and finally entered heaven, has again a sinless soul, he enjoys another kind of sinlessness, namely, holiness. And among many differences between these two states there is this: the one had the tender beauty and weakness of childhood; the other, the shapely strength of manhood. And this difference is in part *developed by trials and temptations.*

So the beautiful innocence of the child Jesus on the fragrant, thyme-covered hills of Nazareth was the bud; and the glorious holiness of the man Jesus under the pillars of “Solomon’s porch,” crying, “Father, glorify thy name!” or among the thick olives of Gethsemane, praying, “Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done"—was the strong and fruitful tree. And one important point in its growth was that memorable month in the desert of Judea, when "he suffered, being tempted."

There, while his body pined for needful food, and his mind pondered the mighty problems of his office, or the mystery of his being driven from among men, or the dark delay it involved in beginning his course ; Satan challenged him to cut the knot, relieve his suffering, settle his doubts, inaugurate his kingdom, and secure his victory. These innocent and noble desires were on one side ; but Jesus *did right*, and he did right by faith ; and in such contests he "learned an obedience" that could only be acquired amid temptations.

Another reason for Christ's being tempted was, that he thus perfected his *sympathy* with his people.

We can easily test the importance of this fact, by supposing the mercy-seat occupied by One who has never known the anguish of spiritual strife—never quenched in tears or

blood "the fiery darts of the adversary." Suppose your strength had been drained, and your slumber broken, and your utmost endurance taxed by temptation. What a chill it would bring over your prayer to remember, "He to whom I must go for help has had no sore experience like mine, to fit his pity to my case."

On the contrary, it is our daily experience that we can go to our Lord with every sort of trouble and trial with a sweet sense of relief, as all these thorny paths have been trodden by his feet. Not a shadow (save only and always that of inward sin) ever falls on us that fell not first on him. Not one cruel hour oppresses us that drew not forth his sighs, and challenged his courage and faith.

Therefore, when refuge and language alike fail us; when sinking nature fears, both that she can sustain no more, and that she cannot tell her present need and anguish; what a drop of balm it is to remember "we need not try to tell him—he will think of his own hunger, or thirst, or loneliness, or reproach, or danger, or temptation, as the case may be, and so he

will read the heart I cannot expound, and understand the grief I cannot express." This is just what Paul says: "For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." And it sheds a new glory on the love of Christ—the "love that passeth knowledge"—when we look upon this terrible trial as deliberately and uncomplainingly borne, to perfect by a bitter experience his sympathy with us.

Still another reason may be assigned for Christ's enduring temptation; namely, that he thus perfected his *example* for our help and guidance.

There is a vast difference, in respect of the impression they make, between a general principle and a living instance. The thoughtful mind acknowledges the justice, the beauty, the wisdom, the deep and wide scope of the law of the Ten Commandments. But the apostle James has told us how slight and transient is the effect they produce upon our minds when they are only heard, and not lived: "If any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural

face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Translate the law into a life, and it acquires an eloquence and a penetrative power it could never have had for us in any other way.

But the example we need, the example that will bring our consciences into action and constrain us to heroic efforts after goodness, must be itself heroic. An easy drifting along a favoring current, in which one does right where it would be a great deal of trouble to go wrong, teaches little, challenges nothing, reproves nothing, stimulates nothing. It is thus I account for it that the purity of the angels impresses us so little.

Now it was for this, among other reasons, that the "Captain of our salvation was made perfect *through sufferings*," and that those sufferings included such long and bitter temptations. They made him just the pattern and ensample for an assailed, struggling, weary people.

Thus Israel was tried at the Red sea, before being led to Sinai; tried again and found

wanting at Kadesh Barnea, and turned back into the desert. Thus Moses was tempted in Egypt, and found faithful; was tried again at Meribah, alas! and forfeited the privilege of entering the promised land.

Thus David underwent the fiery ordeal, through the jealousy of Saul, and proved worthy to be king, and father of a long line of kings, and ancestor of Christ. Saul himself had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting.

So with the whole list of Scripture worthies. Whether we think of Abraham, or Solomon, or Elijah, or the apostles, we find their best days and loftiest work ushered in by *special probations*. "Simon, Simon," said our Lord, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. *And after thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*"

It is a fair inference, therefore, from special trials and temptations, that we are on trial for a special commission. The question for a brave heart is not how we can escape the suffering, but how we shall abide the test. We

may appear such fibreless, flimsy, pulpy creatures that nothing can be intrusted to us. We may prove so impatient and wilful as to be fit for nothing but the curb and the rod. We may betray such unbelief as to estrange and grieve our great Captain: or we may come forth "worthy," as Christ himself has used the word; our faith, being much more precious in the trial than gold which perisheth, "may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

And who can tell how great the results may be, whether in this life or in the life to come? The Pauls and Peters and Johns of the church of the future may even now be forsaking, or denying, or persecuting Jesus, or pressing through the storm of temptations to their lofty responsibilities. Let us bind these two words fast together—temptations and commissions.

The next lesson is, that temptations are *no disgrace and no excuse*.

That they are no disgrace, follows at once from what has just been said. It is no degradation to a man to be propounded and canvassed for lofty and responsible duties. There

is no higher honor than to be "tried" of *God*, "and found faithful."

And yet how many Christians make this very mistake! How often a deep discouragement grows up in the heart, because of signal afflictions or inward trials. They argue, to the morbid and despondent spirit, an abandonment by God, richly earned indeed by our unfaithfulness, but oh, so bitter and grievous! Just as Isaiah says of the Jews' wrong judgment of Christ: "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," while he was bearing our griefs; so we often misjudge our own case, and write cruel things against ourselves, when in truth we are in the battle for Christ and with Christ.

Who does not feel, as we read of Christ's temptation, that though it was a part of his humiliation then, it is a part of his glory now? And they who resist the devil for Christ's sake are not dishonored by the strife.

But these onsets of the adversary are no more an excuse than they are a disgrace. It is not permitted us to say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Satan is not

granted power over men's consciences or wills. The whole subject is profoundly mysterious and obscure ; but it is evident that wicked spirits are allowed to *suggest thoughts*, but not to *control acts* or master the soul, except by its own consent or act. It is we, after all, who must do or neglect to do ; we, who must choose each day, and many times a day, whom we will serve ; we, before whom the cunning tempter must present his plausible sophistries ; we, who by virtue of our individual being and accountability, must decide to yield or to resist. Thus Eve's excuse, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat," went for nothing. Temptations are no excuse. As a quaint old preacher has it, "They are not to be sought, but to be fought."*

A third lesson to be learned here is, that temptations, rightly met, are *helps to obedience* and godliness. A wise but homely proverb runs, "No pains, no gains."

That there is no necessary contamination nor sin in merely being tempted is of course proved by our Lord's experience. And we

* Ambrose, "Looking unto Jesus."

have already seen in what sense he is said to have "*learned* obedience." It remains now to say that there is no known way to develop powers without action. The sturdy blacksmith began life a boy or lad like others. It is the regular, arduous, persevering play of hammer and anvil that strings his limbs with steel. And we know that work is just as needful to the mind as to the body.

It is only when we come to the hygiene of the soul, that this truth is overlooked. God's beloved people will "think it strange concerning the fiery trial which tries them, as though some strange thing happened unto them." But if they are reproached, hated, or tempted, "for the name of Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on them."

While the rains and winds are roaring, seeming fit only to wash or tear the tender plants to ruin, the secret and wonderful life of spring is at work, turning those very agencies into a blessing, and charming bud, and leaf, and flower into being, by their means.

And so with our spiritual growth. "Had not Satan tempted Christ," says the same

pithy and kindly thinker quoted just now, "how could Christ have overcome Satan? The devil having the chain let loose, he lets fly at Christ with all his might; and Christ that without blows could not have got a victory, (inasmuch as victory can only ensue upon a battle,) by this furious assault of Satan both overcomes him and triumphs over him. How was the faith, patience, humility, zeal, and favor of Christ set forth, as they could not have been had he always lain quietly in garrison, and never come into the skirmish? Who could have felt the odoriferous smells of these aromatical spices, if they had not been pounded and bruised in the mortar of temptation?"

"Whatsoever doth make manifest, is light." There is a blessing for us, even in the rage and cunning of hell, if it evokes our principles, tests our purity, challenges and stirs up conscience to utter her imperial voice, and puts us upon the open issue, whose we are, and whom we will serve."

Again, temptations are *Christ's battle-ground*, for us, with us, and in us.

For us; as was nobly seen in that very conflict in the Desert of Judea. Not for himself, but for us, did the Son of God do battle with Satan. He might have sat serene and unsailable in the height of heaven, but for pity and love to us. He scorned not to walk this sordid earth, and to feel the carking of its petty cares, and to bear the insult of such attacks as these, "that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, made like unto his brethren, and able to succor them that are tempted—he himself having suffered, being tempted." So that this whole field of strife receives a certain dignity and elevation from Him who held the lists and routed the foe, without himself enduring a fall. Each believer, in his own time of trial, can say, "I am repeating the 'good fight' which Jesus fought. The same enemy is spending the same malice on feeble me, that dared his worst on my great Captain. Oh, that I may wear the spiritual armor in which he came off victorious, and overcome like him!"

With us; "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." No Christian ever

weeps, or works, or bleeds, or fights *alone*. Never! He may *feel* forsaken and solitary. Often he does feel so. So felt even Jesus in his last dreadful hour. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet we know that it was through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot unto God." Feeling forsaken, and being forsaken, are two very different things. The first is a necessary part of our discipline. The second *is impossible*. And if there be any conjuncture upon which a tempted and triumphant Saviour will take a livelier interest in his suffering people than another, it will surely be when they fight his battles over again with his great enemy and ours. Temptations, therefore, are Christ's battlefield with us. He keeps his station by our side. He watches, with a kindly comrade's interest, the strife go on. He thrusts his shield between us and the blow that would be too heavy to be borne. "With the temptation he makes a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it." And he makes our final deliverance sure.

In us; temptations are Christ's battlefield

in us; "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "We are made partakers of the Divine nature." It is "Christ in us," that is the life of battle, as well as "the hope of glory." The instinct that detects Satan, and the instinct that repels Satan, alike belong to the new heart. What is that which rises up indignantly within you—even though, alas, you do not always hearken to its voice—to say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" What is that, to which inward purity looks so beautiful and precious; which fights hard to retain it; which weeps and longs, hungers and thirsts to get it back when it is lost; which haunts the mercy-seat in an anguish, sometimes voiceless with shame, and then constant in pleadings to be reconciled and blessed once more, when you have gone astray? It is the life of Christ in you; in the one case victorious over his ancient foe; in the other, crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.

Yes; in every one of His people here, the Lord is again in the wilderness, again tempted of the devil. But now, clogged, forsaken and

betrayed by those he loves and died for, his victories are no longer immediate or invariable. But because they are *his* battles, the end, at least, is sure. We shall come forth "conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

Another lesson to be learned here is—*Temptations before heaven*. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things—and to enter into *his* glory?"

Some years ago, I set out to climb a high mountain in North Carolina. The road grew narrower and more rugged as we went on; the cliffs rose higher, and darkened the air; we were bewildered, weary, discouraged; when suddenly, as we crossed an old forsaken patch of farm-ground—suddenly the peak stood out from the blind mass of crags, bathed in sunlight, shining almost like a star, towering four thousand feet above our heads. What a revolution that grand vision wrought in us in a moment! True, the trees and rocks shut us in again immediately; but that mattered nothing now. We had seen the goal; we kept its glory in our hearts. After a long struggle we

won the summit, and planted our feet on the topmost rock.

So God grants us glimpses of heaven amid the whirl and bewilderment of this stormy life. "We see the triumph from afar; by faith we bring it nigh." That faith is to be exercised amid the dark hours of temptation. When the thickets of care beset us; when the paths grow rugged and blind; when the clouds enshroud us; the vision *in our hearts* is to replace the sight, and revive courage, and renew our songs.

All that our dear Bibles tell us of heaven, shows how closely its sweetness and glory are connected with our struggles here. Each of the seven epistles to the churches ends with a promise of heaven "to him that overcometh." The white robes in which the ransomed shine and sing, are given them because they are washed *from sin*. Their crowns fulfil the promise, "*if we suffer*, we shall also reign with Him." Their palms of victory are express mentoes of conflict. And the angel who explains their history begins, "These are they who have come out of great tribulation."

We see, therefore, that heaven is a world of memorials; the world where we are no longer to "forget the things which are behind."

I have often imagined that Christ's kingly array in heaven is composed of the earthly means of his humiliation and anguish, *transfigured*; that the glowing crown he wears, reproduces the crown of thorns; that his humble apparel, the wicked scourge, and above all the cross, "all stained with hallowed blood"—are all *wrought in*, into the resplendent pageantry, "the glory of the Lamb."

And it may well be that something of the same sort is true of us, and that we are painfully, and as it were piece by piece, preparing the trophies on which our history will express itself, and by which the story of our battles with the flesh, the world and the devil will there be told. At any rate, the delightful recollection will possess our souls, of a great Captain-comrade ever with us in the thickest of the fight, and of a delivering Spirit that bore us through triumphant.

Thus, in reaching that blessed country, all sweetest raptures join in one. The joy of es-

cape, the assurance of complete and final safety, the society of the ransomed host, the presence of Jesus, the sense of inward, perfect purity, faithfulness, and spiritual beauty, all, all combine with the resounding anthems and infinite delights to make heaven happy.

Temptations before heaven! That is the bugle-note which cheers us to the combat. This is "the thorny road that leads us to the mount of God." "So he giveth his beloved sleep" at last. War first, then peace—peace that shall never, never pass away.

All we have been led to see of Christ in this discussion, points to one last lesson to be learned here: *Temptations to be fought by prayer.*

Prayer is pouring out the heart to a God who knows and loves us. Addresses made even to an Infinite Being differently affected to us, or to the same Being in a different spirit, or without sincerity and confidence, might be compliments, or negotiations, or windy flatteries; but they certainly are not prayer. He that comes to God must know that he is, and that he rewards, comforts, delivers, redeems,

those who diligently seek him. We must know that he recognizes us, cares for us, listens to us, acknowledges our claim, and responds out of his own heart to the story of our needs, fears, strifes, longings. We *cannot* come as strangers. So to come, is not to come. We cannot come complaining, making reclamations, demurs, special pleas.

Ah, this form of exhortation does injustice to the riches of His love. We *can* come, bringing all the inconsistencies, follies, crimes of our souls, to His feet, and cast them down there! It is just here that the scheme of grace gives us such a supreme and vital advantage over Satan. Let him tear, and bewilder, and darken the spirit of God's child ever so foully; let him make it seethe like a stormy sea with shameful doubts and accusations; let him becloud the heavens above him with murmurings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; and when he has done his worst, let that covenanted soul run, wounded, ragged, abased, hopeless, speechless, to Jesus' feet, and fall down there, dumb, and blind—yea, dead! Then see what a swift and joyful De-

liverer he finds! The Lord has not forgotten the wilderness of Judea, nor his own anguish and deadly strife there. Neither can he slight his own engagements, or the feeblest disciple that is called by his name.

"That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never, *no never*, NO NEVER forsake."

The greatest danger of temptation is in the instinctive impulse to fight it out alone. Sometimes from pride or self-righteousness; sometimes from lack of thought; sometimes from ignorance that the contest is with Satan, and from legal alarms born of his belief that the evil is all in his own heart; sometimes from a bitter sense of desertion and hopeless distance from God, many a Christian battles on silently, in a grievous *and unnecessary* loneliness. Oh, trembling sufferer, *who* promised us, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you?" Unbelief toward Him is an iron shroud. You may not be slain, but you are surely entombed. But break the silence, and he will pierce the shroud. "Pray, if thou canst, or canst not, speak." Little does it matter how you pray, so your heart is in it.

Cry aloud, or whisper, or sigh, or only glance upward. Let the deep ground-swell of your sorrows and desires roll in on Christ, in any way it can. The more frank, unstudied, unartificial the utterance, the more welcome and the more effectual it is.

One of the few men I have ever felt like enjoying, is John the Evangelist; because he often sat so near the Lord Jesus that he could *whisper to him*. But it is only unbelief which ascribes that to him as a peculiar privilege. Jesus is the closest, as well as the kindest companion of every believer. He catches the softest breath of prayer as it leaves the lip—yea, as it stirs in the breast. The faintest footfall, the distilling tear, the pitiful, abashed, imploring look that fears to linger on his kindly face: not one of all is lost on him. It is here, then, we have our battle-ground. Answer Satan by crying to Christ! Temptations are to be fought by prayer.

In concluding this first general division of my subject, I offer one reflection. Every soul is tempted, and in one of two ways. Some

are tempted to their eternal destruction, and some to their eternal glory. And each one of us is in one class or the other.

There is a frightfully large class of persons, in whose case Satan's temptations *fall in with the general bent of their minds*. They are described in Scripture as "walking according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." They are in "the snare of the devil, and taken captive at his will." What the great enemy has to do in their case, therefore, is, evidently, merely to complete his work, not to try to undo God's work.

Temptations, with this great host—the host of the impenitent—are like the gentle dip of the oars when the boat is to glide down stream: it serves to keep its head in the right direction. So they guide men clear of those mercies that might save them. They prevent them from hearing or heeding faithful words; from pondering some message from heaven; from turning aside to thought and prayer. Or they preoccupy the soul with earthly things, or kindle the fires of unholy passion,

or inflate mad pride or foolish vanity, or stimulate self-righteousness, or arm our pitiful fears of the world's laugh, or rage against our peace. But, whether it be in these, or in ten thousand other ways, their errand is just to *make bad worse*, to clinch and finish a work of ruin already begun.

“On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below!”

It is Satan's business to make those treacherous rocks more slippery still, and to heat those fiery billows to a sevenfold glow from the furnace of a self-accusing despair. And the means he employs is—Temptation. By it he seduces; by it he stumbles, bewilders, intoxicates, betrays, destroys! One part of my readers is in that class.

The other is that class with which we have been principally concerned in this discussion. Against them the evil one does his utmost, because he sees them about to escape him. “We are not ignorant,” says the great apostle, “of his devices.” “Your adversary goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

As we have seen, nothing is too cruel, base, audacious, for him to attempt. Though we weep with sorrow, or writhe in pain, while we sleep, while we resolve against him, yea, while we pray, the hateful cloud of his ministers haunts us, hovers over us, hunts us. How can we resist or baffle him?

Ah, greater is HE that is on our side than all that are against us! Who is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? Principalities and powers shall not be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He will do more than defend us: he will make all things fall out for the furtherance of the gospel, and our lasting benefit.

So he who hates us unwillingly befriends us; he who ensnares us trains us to break his snares; he who pollutes our thoughts thereby purifies our souls. God's "hook," that was in Sennacherib's "nostrils," is in the nostrils of a mightier than Sennacherib. And God's people are raised on the very wings of the stormy wind that would beat them down, and soar on and up, into heaven's gate.

There it will be seen, what helps to sanctification and glory temptations have been, and how much of our triumph and blessedness we owe to the strife which the kingdom of the wicked one was permitted to carry on against us. There will be a special strain of praise among our endless thanksgivings to the love that tried us as silver is tried, and laid affliction upon our loins, but would not suffer our enemy to ride over our heads. Him who brought us safe through Jordan; Him who overcame the world for us; Him who made us more than conquerors; Him will we love, and praise, and enjoy, for ever and ever!

But the practical question is—In which class are we? Is Satan our father and our master, or our surely defeated foe? Have we another Master, Jesus? Do temptations, when they come, send us farther on the road we are already travelling, or hinder, stumble, weary, drive us back? Do we conspire with Satan for our own ruin? Or is there war between him, on the one side, and us and our Lord, on the other?

- “There is a safe and secret place
Beneath the wings divine,
Reserved for all the heirs of grace :
Oh, be that refuge mine.
- “The least and feeblest there may bide
Uninjured and unawed ;
While thousands fall on every side,
He rests secure in God.
- “The angels watch him on his way,
And aid with friendly arm ;
And Satan, roaring for his prey,
May hate, but cannot harm .
- “He feeds in pastures large and fair
Of love and truth divine :
O child of God ! O glory's heir !
How rich a lot is thine !
- “A hand almighty to defend,
An ear for every call,
An honored life, a peaceful end,
And heaven to crown it all.”

HENRY FRANCIS LYTE.



THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward a hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”
MATT. 4:2-4.

A GLANCE at the situation in which our Lord Jesus was, at this moment, will show us where this first temptation was expected to find its power. And we may be sure that Satan had considered all his plans, before he began that battle.

His youth and manhood had both been passed in the quiet obscurity of Nazareth. The fragrant hills covered with thyme, and mottled with oaks and olive-trees, had shut him in from the wild and noisy world. The homely industry of Joseph and his own labor, (and perhaps that of his brothers) had sup-

plied the modest wants of the household. And the general tone of the narrative would lead us to conceive that this virtuous family had mingled but little with the rude population of the village, and had formed but few and slight ties among them. So, peacefully, in a pure, calm atmosphere, in almost solitude, the sublimest life on earth flowed on for thirty years.

Then came a violent and sudden change. The sweet shade of home is forsaken. The rugged hills are crossed, the paths of the Jordan valley pursued southward, until the divine Pilgrim overtakes the "great multitude" that crowded about John among the many springs at Ænon and the ford at Bethabara. Then comes the baptism; and thence, with the words of his Father's acknowledgment ringing in his ears, he is "driven" (Mark 1:12) from the haunts of men to the haunts of the wild beasts; from the happy hours of home to utter solitude; from the steady supply of comfortable food to the borders of starvation. The habits of a life are abruptly broken up. The most sensitive spirit in the world is robbed, as in a moment of time, of the tokens of

a mother's love, and now of the very last approving look and voice of man.

One can hardly avoid referring in part to this time the language of Paul, commending to us a High Priest, "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." Heb. 5:2, 7. Having lost, as we must suppose, the sensible comforts and supports of his Father's presence—and that in the very moment when that Father had claimed him for his own; burdened with his mighty enterprise, bewildered with this mysterious abandonment in the desert, weakened by hunger and thirst, deprived of every outward seal and token of his commission; then, if ever, might a sinful "if" be injected into his mind, and the promised Saviour, the last hope of man, be disabled for his blessed office.

The problem was made to take this form:
(1.) "I have believed myself to be the Mes-

siah; but can I be so, and be left in this humiliation and distress?" (2.) "If I am, I can prove my powers by working this miracle, and supplying my need." (3.) "If I starve, whatever work I have been appointed to do, whether as Messiah or otherwise, will fail to be done." Here was a triple knot, which one miracle-working word, "commanding the stones that they become bread," would cut.

The temptation, therefore, was to test his *Messiahship by an unwarranted and unbelieving work*. Unwarranted, because no part of his covenant duty was to be done by it. Unbelieving, because he had already the word of God, spoken at the Jordan, declaring his Sonship and his Father's love.

So much, then, by way of a general view of this first temptation. Let us proceed to analyze it, and point out some of the fallacies involved in it. For temptations usually, as we shall see—though not always—involve fallacies; that is, falsehoods plausibly disguised.

1. One of them is, that poverty and seeming desertion are inconsistent with being honored of God. It was that falsehood, assumed

but not spoken, that gave point to the whole proposal of Satan. It was assumed, because we are so apt to feel it. It was left unspoken, because as soon as it is placed in a bare, logical form, it becomes doubtful, and when examined is evidently untrue.

If the tempter had been obliged to speak out, he must have said, "It is true, we heard a voice, apparently from heaven, acknowledging thee as the Son of God; but that was six weeks ago, and since then what hast thou had but want and trouble? The Son of God starving! The Messiah caged up in the desert! A king from heaven, and no subjects, nor even a pillow for thy head! Impossible! Where are thy retinue, thy riches, thy honor? When thou hast famished here, as now thou art fainting, what good will it do thee that thou wast called the Son of God? But if thou wilt believe it, prove it; command these stones that they be made bread."

And the answer, clearly, is, "Poverty and distress may be, and frequently are, a part of God's way with those he loves and designs to honor." This instance of Christ is only the

most illustrious instance. Who ever reads the story of the Syro-phœnician woman without feeling that Jesus did signal honor to her faith by drawing it out in that trying way? So long as it is the highest honor of the servant of God that he has been faithful to God under difficulties, so long will poverty, humiliation, and apparent desertion become tokens of his favor. Jesus, calmly enduring, unshaken by suffering, true to his Father even in his inmost thoughts while swallowed up in the wilderness, presents an aspect of heroism that neither men nor angels will ever weary of admiring. And he who gave him the opportunity to display such traits under such tests, thereby proved how he loved and honored him.

2. Another false assumption in this case was, that it is always a duty to comprehend God's dealings with us.

"Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself!" That was the testimony of the evangelical prophet Isaiah. Not only is this a necessary result of his infiniteness, because a finite creature *cannot* comprehend him, but

it belongs essentially to the discipline of this life that we should not comprehend him, but walk by faith. And this, probably, is the reason why the text just quoted (Isa. 45:15) calls him "God of Israel, the Saviour." Discipline, the training of faith with our other principles, is a part of salvation. Knowing how we stand with God, we must be able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We must be true to him, whatever we may hope or fear. We must learn to hold on our way, obedient, patient, loyal, unshrinking, even when burdened with doubts of ourselves, with weariness, ill-omens, despondency. And yet this necessary education can only advance while the loving face of the Lord is hidden from us. It is only then that we can resolve not to depart from present duty, or break our covenant engagements, or cast reflections upon his truth, because his treatment of us is dark and unaccountable.

Here, then, we have another suggestion of falsehood on Satan's part. It was implied that Jesus' knowing his official position and his relations to the Father was a matter of

so much importance, he should disregard all other considerations, and settle the question for himself. If the stones had become bread, the Son would have worked a miracle without the Father's will, and the previous eternal unity would have been broken. And if they had not become bread at his command, it would be because the Incarnation had ceased, and Jesus had fallen. So subtle and dangerous was the snare, and so easily was it broken.

3. But this fallacy itself was included in another and broader one—that we are under no obligation to respect a mystery.

This much abused word simply means *a secret revealed to the initiated*. The ancients had the "Eleusinian" and other "mysteries;" certain matters were kept hidden from the outside world and even from young adherents and disciples. They were a part of the honor and reward reserved for those who had passed their probation successfully, and were now to be received into full fellowship. Such secrets as these were called "mysteries."

What a striking and beautiful figure this becomes in the New Testament use of the

word! "Mysteries" here are God's secrets, the secrets that he means to tell us in due time. As Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," so it is with his Father and our Father, his God and our God. And besides this reason for keeping his secrets—namely, that we could not bear them now—there are doubtless many others equally good. But the main point of present duty is reached when we know of any given matter *that it is one of God's secrets*. When we know that, we know also our Father's will concerning it—that we should wait.

If I pass a house and find the window-curtains dropped, it is a point of honor not to peer within. If my friend goes into his room and shuts the door, or lowers his voice as I draw near, I respect his privacy, whatever it may concern. And so with my God. Whether it be in doctrine or in providence, when it becomes evident that I am not intended to understand, a loving faith takes pleasure in reposing upon his excellence without explanations. It glories in knowing HIM by a di-

recter route than special explanations. It is proud of a God whom it can trust unseen. It exclaims with David: "Clouds and darkness are round about him; but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

But in all this faith is simply doing its duty. God hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness; and he has a right to dwell there. It is part of our obedience to respect mysteries.

And if that be so, Jesus could have no right to work this miracle to terminate a mystery—to trespass upon the Father's secret will, and wring from him that which for the present he chose not to reveal. But this was the very object to be attained—to settle the supposed doubts of Christ's sonship, and end the trial into which the Spirit had driven him. Satan thus assumed a falsehood to urge his suggestions upon our Lord.

4. Again, it was assumed that trying *faith* could not be as important as trying *gifts*.

For, clearly, if this first might be the more important in any case, the very circumstances would seem to show that it was so in this case.

There must be some very strong reason for God's first announcing his well-beloved Son, and then leaving him in utter solitude and on the brink of death in the desert. And unless Christ's trying his own official character and powers was the most important and pressing of duties, it was his duty to "wait on the Lord." Now what is the right principle in this matter?

Gifts—that is, things bestowed—by a wise and faithful one in authority, are bestowed of course for a purpose. Whether prerogatives or powers, they cannot have been tossed to their possessor in a fit of caprice or in a momentary weakness. They are messages, commissions, commandments. And the very first necessity for their right employment is entire oneness of will between the giver and the receiver. But that union of our wills is the work of faith, faith that worketh by love. Faith itself is thus the superior gift; and until it attains its establishment and proper sway, gifts are dangerous.

Our carnal minds are very prone to under-rate the value and power of faith. Even the

emphatic language of the Lord himself, so often and earnestly repeated, fails to impress us as it should. The question is not of its natural power, but of its ordained power. God has put the very highest honor on it, and accepts it as rendering him the very highest honor he can receive from man. He made it the channel of miracle, in the worker of miracles, and often in the subject of them. He makes it now the very key of the kingdom of heaven. And as the Redeemer was to "take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in fashion as a man," nothing, after his evident sinlessness, was so absolutely necessary to the First-born among many brethren, the Example and Leader of the host, as a tried and perfect faith, proved in the fire and seen to be pure gold.

We see, therefore, that every other issue could well be postponed to this—the full testing of Jesus' faith in God. If that failed, all other gifts would be but a splendid snare. If that held, all other things would come in due time. It was a false and wicked suggestion of Satan's, that his office and his powers must

be tried first, and in disregard of the paramount value and duty of faith.

5. Another fallacy involved here was, that supporting grace counts for nothing. Ah, that is one of the incessant mistakes of the church.

How could Jesus have lived those forty days, if he had not been miraculously upheld? Homelessness, solitude, danger, the burden of his mighty office, the pangs of hunger, the anguish of suspense, the importunities of the evil one—why, they were enough to have broken his heart, if he had not known whom he believed, if he had not been upheld by the everlasting arms of Grace. But if Grace was supporting him there, *then he was in the right place*, and the problem of his temptations would be solved in due time. Christ could have yielded to the subtleties of Satan only by ignoring the fact that he had been upheld by God through all.

This may look like a very slight snare in the presence of such a patent fact. But daily observation teaches every pastor that in cases of despondency, and in many cases of affliction, supporting grace is entirely overlooked as an

evidence of covenant relations with God. It is so silently bestowed, and *fitted into* the soul and conformed to its laws with such exquisite skill, does its work designedly with so little to invoke "sight"—that is, consciousness and attention—that it goes undiscovered. And thus the believer laments the withdrawal of grace with a lamentation he would never utter but for grace, and asks your sympathy for a sorrow over his own unregeneracy of which he would be incapable if he were not regenerated.

This is no play upon words, but a simple and literal truth. "Walking by faith" clearly implies that something is not seen, which, if it were seen, would cause us to walk "by sight." That something, in this case, is the communication of grace. Its presence is to be assumed, through our faith in the Holy Spirit, though not perceivable by our consciousness, just as our pardon is to be believed in, through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, though not attested by any material token.

It was against this faith of Jesus that Satan strove, both here and later on Calvary. It was

over this assault that he triumphed, in that prayer which is the sublimest paradox in human language: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*" Thou art mine, even when thou seemest to forsake me. I claim thee! I call thee back! Forsaking itself cannot part us!

Here, as everywhere, he is our ensample that we should follow in his steps. His tempted people, in solitude and darkness, are to remember what they would be if the Spirit had not upheld them and "borne them in the wilderness as a nurse" bears a child (see Acts 13:18, marginal reading); and acknowledging that wonderful and long-suffering grace, thank God and take courage.

6. The last fallacy I now mention is this: that the body is anything more than the servant and vehicle of the soul.

If the body and its needs deserved independent consideration, it *might* be right to work this miracle and supply bread; if not, it could not be right. This is part of the meaning of Christ's reply: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." This implies that

the mere sustenance of the body is a subordinate matter. True, bread itself could not sustain us without "the word of the Lord;" that is, unless he had impressed such a law upon Nature. But even the fulfilling of that physical law would not make man "live" in the true sense of the word. As said the Teacher himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, "the life is more than meat."

The life is the developed action of the soul. The soul is the man. That soul employs its body—inhabits it, uses it, dignifies and adorns it. Eclipse the soul, and you have idiocy; unseat it, and you have insanity; remove it, and you have death. True, the body reacts upon the spirit; and God has made the connection between them so close and vital as to make man one person out of two natures. Still, looking at the whole life, the body is the servant of the soul. If it befits the man to work, the body must labor; if it befits him to enlist in a war, the body must take the risk of wounds; if it befits him to be a martyr, the body must die.

And it was and is the more important to

bring out this truth in strong relief, because the very opposite impression grows on us so insensibly, strongly, and constantly. The lower nature is incessantly asserting groundless claims. "You (the soul) must not go to prayer-meeting to-night, because I (the body) am weary." "You (the ransomed and pledged heart) must neglect God's house, because I (the silly head) have not a new hat!"

If Jesus could have been induced to assume the imperative right of the body to be cared for, clothed and fed comfortably, as of old, then he must at least have considered the question, whether this miracle was not the proper means of self-defence. But he cut off that discussion by "living upon the word of the Lord."

All the false assumptions that haunt the mind of sinful man, and that could be brought to bear upon the case, were levied on to make this first temptation a success. But there was no weak joint in his armor, no dubiousness in his mind begotten by collisions of duty with interest or safety. He who had been "subject unto his parents" was now likewise

subject unto his Father, even God, and that preserved him.

In order to a proper estimation of the contest and the victory, it will now be necessary to look at some of the bearings of this temptation on Christ's interests and glory.

And the reflection that especially invites remark is, that in Christ's whole official life this temptation was repeated and continued.

We have seen that it was the wonder-working "word of the Lord" that sustained his life and courage in the absence of all their natural supports. Elijah, roused by the touch of the angel to eat the miraculous bread, was not more truly maintained in being by a heavenly interposition than was our Lord at this time. And yet, when we look at his complex nature, his hostile surroundings, the infinite burden of the task he had undertaken, the sufferings necessarily incident to his pure life among the hosts of sinful brethren—a sentient rock immersed in the billows—and above all, the fruitlessness and waste of the whole of it, except upon an engagement that should bring

the concurrent powers and offices of the whole Trinity to bear upon the work ; when we look, I say, at these things, we feel not only that God's word, or covenant, did actually sustain him, but that there was the same sort of difficulty in his realizing and acting upon that fact at all subsequent periods as during the first temptation. Let me illustrate that remark.

One of the most striking evidences of Christ's peculiar nature and office is found in the *incessant incongruities* of his life. It proves impossible to *class* him anywhere. He cannot be placed upon any degree of the whole scale of being, from the highest to the lowest.

He sits wearied upon the curb of Jacob's well : he falls asleep on a pillow in the stern of a boat ; he grows hungry again and again ; he has to escape from the rage of a mob and "hide himself," and take refuge beyond Jordan. Shall we then conclude that he is a man ? Why, this hungry man feeds five thousand, besides women and children, with five barley cakes and two small fishes. How should he ever hunger ? This weary man speaks to the raging storm, and at once there is a great

calm. What reservoirs of power! how should he be weary? He who cast out a legion of devils with a word, could he not control a few hundred brutal men in a mob? When he could take money from the mouth of a fish to pay his tax, why should he not have where to lay his head? He is a man, that is evident; but he is so much more than a man that no such classing can fulfil the conditions or satisfy our minds.

His knowledge is too wonderful for us. He "knows what is in man, and needeth not that any should tell him." He prophesies of the future, both the near and the remote, with a minuteness that can only be accounted for by supposing that he is already present with it, or that he himself absolutely controls it. Is he not divine? But behold, he shall presently tell you that "of that day and hour knoweth no man, *nor even the Son*, but the Father only."

He cast out the devils; yet Satan put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him, and he betrayed him accordingly. He persuades, commands, converts men; but presently men will neither be persuaded nor commanded, but

furiously cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" and hate and hunt him to death. Are we then driven to confess that they had *found him out*? That some broken faith, or selfish purpose, or fatal infirmity had come to light, and that this had roused their indignation? Listen; and they themselves shall tell you, while he is dying: "He saved others! He trusted in God! yea, he delighted in God!" It was said in cruel mockery; yet if it had not been true, they could not have mocked him with it. But he needed not the testimony of man. A few short hours brought him the superb vindication of the Resurrection. And even that was not a vindication from without. It was *self-wrought*. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." This was the commission he had received from his Father.

These wonderful incongruities run through his whole career. They compel us, when our eyes are once opened, to see a double nature in him—the height of Godhead and the depth of humanity. He is more than a king, more

than an angel; yet he is "a worm and no man a reproach of men, and despised of the people." We learn to love him as our brother, and to worship him as our God.

But while these sublime incongruities constrain us to wonder and reverence, and are an integral part of his glory, it is clear that they incessantly repeat the difficulties which Satan relied upon in the first temptation. They may be endured or even understood by faith, but they entangle reason in doubts, and breed that ensnaring and tempting condition of the mind—suspense. This is seen in fact in the repeated appeals of the people to himself: "Wherefore dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." They were impatient of "the veil that was upon their hearts;" they were not ready to walk by faith. They insisted upon his taking some plain and settled course which they could comprehend with carnal minds; and because he would not, they rejected and hated him.

He perplexed his disciples, even during the resplendent triumph of the Transfiguration, by telling them of his betrayal, crucifixion, and

death—which to their minds necessarily involved defeat. And the manner in which he spoke, both then and at other times—as, for example, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”—abundantly shows that these discrepancies, though they could not perplex or shake him, were yet present to his thoughts and appreciated in the difficulties they presented.

There can be no need to prove, at this point, that the tendency of these profound incongruities was precisely the same with those specially presented in the desert. They tried the mind with the same difficulties; they tempted impatience by the same suspense; they chafed the royal heart with the same humiliations. How was it that Jesus the man was not perplexed or impatient? not torn with doubts, nor driven to cut the knot and prove himself the monarch and the conqueror he has been called, by some decisive work? It was upon the very principle with which he had defeated Satan in the wilderness that he brushed aside these importunate and tempting questions. “By the word of God doth man live.”

Excluding, for reasons to be presently explained, the "word of the Lord" as spoken by his prophets, this phrase is found to be applied in four leading senses in the Scriptures. There is the creative word, the conserving word, the judicial word, and the covenant word. "God said, Let there be light; and there was light;" that was a creative word. "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. . . . But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store;" that is the conserving word. By his word, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." There is the judicial word (2 Pet. 3:5-7); still more fully illustrated in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. All that is made, all that is supported in being, all that is brought to destruction, lives out its entire history under his command.

But these various "words" find their place and time through the power and working of the other; that is, the covenant word. In all his making and unmaking, the God of truth is

executing his engagements and fulfilling his promises. The deed of to-day was in the covenants of eternity. -

Now the "word of the Lord by the mouth of his prophets" was only a more distinct and detailed utterance of these four great "words," a sort of "reading-made-easy" of the commands and covenants of Jehovah. Just as we syllable our thoughts and consultations in simpler words and with many repetitions, warnings, explanations, to our little children, just so has God spoken his "word" to us.

What a sublime light does this thought cast upon many declarations of Scripture! "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." It had not to be *let in* somewhere into his plans as a new element. Its place and work were fixed from the beginning. "Clouds and darkness are round about him;" "mercy and truth are the habitation of his throne." Not mercy alone, but mercy and truth; that is, steadfastness to his covenants. He is "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy . . . to a thousand generations."

It is only when we have attained to this view, that Creation and Providence put on their proper dignity by being seen in their true significance. They are the enginery of the promises of God. The rising and descending worlds, the flowing and the ebbing tides of life, the sunshine and the rain, the ordered and the broken seasons, all alike—all, all take their motion and direction from his covenants. They are clad in his truth as in a garment. The Father and the Son and the Spirit, who said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image," have done that and all their works in pursuance of those divine engagements in which they stand, and the discharge of the respective offices they undertake to fill.

And now it is evident that in nothing else is the life and honor of the almighty God so deeply involved as in the stability of his covenant "word" and the confidence it inspires. If we gaze on the majestic beauty of the heavens, we feel that they must have been built *for a reason*, and we find that reason in the plans which the Ineffable Persons had covenanted together to carry out. And if it were

possible that they could become the monuments of the broken truth of God, it would be better that they should dissolve and disappear with all the eyes that ever beheld them.

If the confidence of heaven in the integrity of God could be shaken, it would be heaven no more. Josephus tells us that, as the end of the frightful siege of Jerusalem drew nigh, and the fate of the temple was sealed, a bright cloud swam near the temple in the night, and drifted away again, while a chorus of heavenly voices chanted in strains of indescribable pathos and pity, "Let us depart hence!" But very different would be the outcry of anguish and horror, where horror and anguish were never known before, if doubts of HIM found access there.

But even this is not all as it concerns Christ and his temptation. He was himself the utmost and noblest fruit of the covenant. He owed his earthly being to that compact of the Eternal Three. Sung by prophets, painted in types, both anticipated and worshipped in sacrifice, the Desire and Consolation of Israel, the world's Hope and Safety incarnate, Jesus

was the very embodiment of "the truth of the Lord which endureth for ever."

Yet if his office was a prophecy, his person, as we have seen, was a mystery. It must be so, if he was still further to magnify the word of the Lord. He must be a witness, as well as a memorial. Man being so dull and crude, so dead to God because so alive to the world, man must be awakened and kindled, rebuked and taught by the visible living of Jesus upon his Father's commands and promises.

"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God;
And thy rich glories from afar
Sparkle on every rolling star.

"But in *his* looks a glory stands,
The noblest labor of thy hands;
The pleasing lustre of his eyes
Outshines the wonders of the skies!"

It is the "sweet theme of grace" that makes Christ so supremely lovely; and grace is the child of the covenant.

And now at last we can begin to see what a deadly thrust this first temptation was. The life of God is in his covenant truth, and the

life of the covenant is Jesus Christ our Pledge, Example, Teacher, all in one. A doubtful deed, a clouded confidence, a hesitation to repose absolutely in that great word which God had spoken, would have made a breach more dreadful and more hopeless than the treason of Adam. As in certain diseases the slightest dash of rain cooling the air is a sentence of death to the sick; so to the world, already in the shadow of death, the passage of that one cloud over the sun, even for a moment, would have brought the final, irreparable ruin. No signs of horror or of woe, in the heavens above or the earth beneath, would have sufficed to express it. The transient sacrifice of Calvary covered the sun with sackcloth, and robed the sky in darkness, and cracked the rocky ribs of the world. Yet Calvary was victory and salvation, and this would have been defeat and death.

Perhaps we may profitably pursue this train of thought one stage farther. It is a curious and instructive fact that the words used in the Greek language to designate faith and obedience are derived from the same root; and so

with the names of unbelief and disobedience. And we have seen, at every step in this discussion, how vital is their connection ; so that really, often, faith itself is the very highest style of obedience. And indeed the same inward relationship appears in our own tongue in the words "faith" and "faithful."

Now, what is that bond of unity? What is that grace or temper of the mind, one of whose aspects is trust, and the other allegiance? What is that fact within a living soul which at once secures its confidence and sways its will?

What can it be but an inward and vital oneness? A common life supplies sympathy, kindles insight, draws up knowledge out of the wells of consciousness. And the same community of spirit effects the movement of the lower will in conformity to the higher in the same kind. If this sounds abstruse for the moment, it is easily expounded.

It is just as impossible to describe feelings to those who have not had them, as to depict colors for the blind. But in souls of the same strain—and in proportion as they resemble

each other—an emotion or a passion in one can evoke a response in the other. That which words cannot convey, is made known by expression, whether of eye or voice or feature or deed ; and it is understood by sympathy, and so multiplies itself, as light does by reflection. The nobler affections of human nature are utterly beyond the reach of instruction ; so indeed are the lower, even to the vilest. They are *caught*, not taught.

When the missionaries reached a certain part of Southern Africa, they found the tribes acute enough in war, in hunting, and in commerce. They were stolid only on the subject of unselfish love. That these foreigners should have come as invaders or as spies, as merchants or as magicians, to cheat, to kidnap, to rob, to ravish—either or all of these were intelligible and credible. But that they had come from a far country *simply to do them good*, and to preach a self-sacrificing Redeemer, this was not merely improbable, it was *inconceivable*. And they never were able to take in the thought until “the Spirit of God’s Son was shed forth in their hearts” by regenera-

ting grace. Then, for the first time, when they loved, they understood love.

Thus it is through the whole round of human nature. The mother does not communicate love to her child; her throbbing heart and glowing face *awake* it. The teacher who does not delight in the subjects of study, will only make lifeless and perfunctory pupils. The eyes of soldiers must take fire from the eyes of their general; and then it will be in them what it is in him, whether the pure flame of patriotism, or the red rage of plunder and hate. Inward unity is everywhere, and in the measure of its completeness, the source of confidence and the soul of obedience.

It thus appears that the key to Christ's whole life and office is in that saying: "I and my Father are one."

"I do always the things that please my Father;" "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight;" "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done"—what are all these, and the many more like them, but expressions of that perfect oneness? And that last High-priestly prayer itself, so earnestly and repeatedly be-

seeing that we may be one in Christ, is now seen to ask much more than that we "fall not out by the way," which is nearly all it is usually reputed to mean. It is the extension to us, unworthy, clodlike, egotizers, sordid, rebellious, unbelieving, of that life of God in the soul, whereby we shall freely obey and confidently trust—endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible."

Similarly it appears that the falsehood which Satan endeavored to insinuate was: "Thou and thy Father are two." "Thou canst not depend utterly upon His word; thou canst not always wait upon his mysterious delays; thou hast the power to defend, to satisfy, to glorify thyself; act for thyself! Command these stones, feed thy hunger, vindicate thy office, establish thy kingdom!"

Oh, blessed be the name of our Saviour for ever and ever, that he had the sublime strength to wait, and that the most subtle temptations were naught to him. Standing in his awful probation as the representative of misbelieving and disloyal man, as the very Person of the Church that was to be, neither

the agonies of life as embodied in famine, solitude, and danger, nor the weaknesses of the finite mind strained by disappointment and suspense, nor the devices of the Adversary himself, could tarnish even for a moment his resplendent loyalty. He sat among the impassible rocks more firm than they. He was more moved by the fluttering wind than by the importunities of Satan.

And thus he endured, not for himself only, nor only for his office. Looking down upon us from the heights of his glory, and of the joy set before him,

“With scars of honor in his flesh
And triumph in his eyes,”

he graciously challenges us to emulate the faith, the patience, and the zeal which shone in him. We are “brethren in the . . . patience of Jesus Christ.”

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." MATT. 4:5-7.

THE clew to this second temptation is undoubtedly to be found in the repeated challenges of the Jews to our Lord to show them "a sign *from heaven*." (See Matt. 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16.) While they could not deny the miracles wrought from day to day on the bodies of their friends and kindred, and in control of the elements by their side or at their feet, they had still that strange oriental craving for wonders on high. Now the air, the clouds, the stars, were all alike "heaven" in their use of the word.

They remembered the sublime phrases of their ancient prophets about "wonders in the heaven above;" how the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and terrible day of the Lord should come. And they sought a literal fulfilment, in some degree at least, of those predictions to convince them that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

But it was no part of the divine plan that they should "walk by sight" in the matter of discovering and acknowledging their King. It was to the heart, and not to the eye that Christ was to be revealed. His "fan" was "in his hand;" that is, he was to effect a discrimination among men, between faith and unbelief, just as the winnowing-fan discriminated between wheat and chaff. If he had wrought wonders that would satisfy the carnal mind, he would have failed to attract those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness; and while he won and enlightened these last, he must necessarily offend the others. It was clearly impossible to fill the ideal of both.

And it is worth our remarking just here, that

this particular demand of the Jews, sustained as it seemed to be by prophecy, never was met during the lifetime of Jesus. The star of Bethlehem was indeed a sign from heaven; but it shone at his birth, and did not appear to be his work. The calming of the stormy sea was a sign from heaven; but it was done in midnight darkness, and for the apostles alone. Not once in those three years of miracle did the Lord command the clouds, nor sway the sun, nor darken the stars. Not until his death impended—indeed, was already begun—did that benign repose and happy order of the skies seem to break up. Not till Israel had crucified its King did He give the long-demanded “sign from heaven.”

Now, according to the Jewish phraseology, the deed which Satan challenged Jesus to do would have been such a sign. To have gone out upon the dizzy height where Solomon's Porch overlooked the outer wall of the temple enclosure, and plunged thence safely through those hundreds of feet into the crowded street below; and to have claimed then and there, upon the strength of that wonder, to be the

Son of David that was to come, would have won for the moment the whole multitude to be his devoted, blind, fanatical adherents, full of sordid passions and wicked pride, but brave, swift, obedient, unconquerable, except by death; such men as, forty years afterwards, wrested swords and pikes from the hands of Roman soldiers, and burned Titus' ramparts before his face.

Herein, therefore, lay the temptation. He who "knew what was in man," knew what a short-cut to victory and power this miracle would be. And under the taunting doubt, "*If thou be the Son of God,*" he was to be urged, if possible, to evade the humiliation, toils, and anguish that opened before him, and conquer a carnal kingdom by one "mighty work." True, that conquest involved the sacrifice of the spiritual kingdom promised him by covenant; but Satan, who had himself made that exchange, and lost his high place in heaven for a base and wretched reign, was fain to hide that difficulty if he could, or gloss it over as far as he might, that the Plan of Mercy might come to naught.

The device of the adversary failed, as its predecessor had done, through the simple obedience of Christ to the law of his Father: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To put himself into danger, so as to force his Father to rescue him by miracle, whether it were so ordered in his counsels or not, would be to "tempt" him. It would be forcing an alternative upon him: "Thou must either deliver thy Son by a sudden interposition, or see him perish and thy plans fail." This no true son would do, least of all, the Son of God.

The first temptation, as we saw, was that Jesus should *satisfy himself* that he was the Christ, and put an end to his own (assumed) doubts by making the stones bread. The second was a temptation to *convince the people* of his Messiahship, by meeting them on their own carnal and superstitious grounds, and suiting his appeals and demonstrations to their sinful heart. He who was in the first case to be a self-deceiver, was to be in the second case a popularity-hunter and charlatan.

If our Lord had fallen under the first temptation, he would have manifested *distrust and impatience*, by working an unauthorized miracle to cut short an appointed trial; and that would have exposed and ruined him. But if he had fallen under the second, he would have manifested also *a vain and worldly ambition*, seeking the suffrages of men by carnal means; and would thus have disgraced and betrayed his kingly dignity. In the one, he would have been the representative of those who try rashly to end their doubts of their own powers and position by forsaking the post of duty. In the other, of those who magnify the formidableness and value of the world's regard, and sacrifice for it the command and favor of the Most High.

It is here that the practical lessons of the Second Temptation emerge into view. But in order to do them justice, we must get a clearer idea of the exigency in which it occurred.

The condition of the Chosen People at this time was one of distraction, dissension, and oppression, verging upon despair. The power

of the Roman empire had rolled over them, like some great boulder over the teeming grass, crushing its puny inhabitants into the earth. The resident rulers were the Herods, the dregs of Idumæa, the brutal representatives of an immemorially hated race; fierce, suspicious, treacherous, lustful, bloodthirsty; wanting in no vice but avarice, and that they need not possess while the exaction of the tribute was farmed out to the publicans. The loadstar of the Jewish religion was dimmed, because the high priest, who should have held his sacred office for life, was the puppet of the temporary government, put down or pushed aside and supplanted by the favorite for the day of tetrarch or proconsul.

The vices which are native to misery and bondage sprung up and filled the land. The people became again what they had been in Egypt. Falsehood, violence, ignorance, were rife. Sorcerers and diviners abounded. Superstition thrived, because faith was dying. Yet threads of the old heroism ran through the sordid mass. The splendid histories of better days lingered in legends and psalms;

the hidden meaning of prophecies gleamed more brightly through the waters as they neared the surface. The instinct of the nation found its coming Deliverer, the "Consolation of Israel."

Each heart hoped concerning him after its kind. The sordid prated of riches; the gay, of pleasure; the passionate, of vengeance. None understood him in advance. It was the highest feat of faith and loyalty not to dictate what he should be and what he must do. So lost, unagreed, bewildered were they, that Matthew declares "they were tired and lay down; they fainted and were scattered abroad, and were as sheep having no shepherd." Born heirs, they were disinherited. The people of God, they were the slaves of the heathen. Such inward knowledge, combined with such outward facts, has never failed to debase a nation. And it has never failed to make them follow false leaders, and die for a delusive hope.

Now, when the time had come for his appearing unto Israel, it was a profound problem—a most dark and doubtful one to any

wisdom less than divine—how he should make his first impression. What report should fly abroad over the land concerning him? It might be one that would fire the whole race, both at home and abroad. It might drive the Herods to terror and despair. It might fill great Rome itself with awe. Or, short of this, it might rehearse something so brilliant, so much in harmony with their prejudices and expectations, so palpably like David's or Solomon's deeds of old, that the people should instantly recognize him as their promised King, flock to his standard, and conquer for him a throne.

But the beginning no one could have imagined, was the one he actually chose. That their Messiah should be born in poverty, without so much even as a reputable shelter in an inn, and threatened for a little while with repudiation by his nominal father; that this waif of Bethlehem and estray of Egypt should have his home at last in a village proverbially bad even in coarse and lawless Galilee, and live by a mechanical trade; that he should begin his official life a penniless wanderer,

standing quietly aloof from the great and the devout of his nation, and presently throwing down his gauntlet to them; that he should slight warlike courage, which they admired, and despise riches and splendor, which they craved, and condemn abuse, in which they abounded, and denounce revenge, in which they sought compensation for the burdens that they bore; that he should eat with publicans and harlots, and defy Pharisees as hypocrites; that he should refuse to fight or slay or reign: all this, laying the axe to the very root of the tree of their carnal hopes and characteristic forms of sin, did more than disappoint them. It challenged them. It kindled their enmity. It enlisted patriotism, bigotry, pride, avarice, malice—their virtues and their vices—all upon the side of his opponents, and made them his personal and deadly foes.

And it becomes clear, as we look farther into his life, that there was a definite, fixed purpose in his mind on this subject. For the same solicitation returned upon him from every side and in various shapes. It was this, apparently, that sent his mother to him at

Cana, with the eager whisper, "They have no wine." This was the secret of the apostles' disappointment, when he quietly withdrew from Capernaum, though "all men sought for him." This rose up boldly and grappled with him in the coast of Bethsaida after the feeding of the five thousand, when the multitude resolved to "come and take him by force and make him a king."

And in all these cases, and the many other like them, there is a perfect unity of conduct on his part. He not only does not take advantage of these offers of popularity, he will not even endure them. He reproves his mother, disappoints the disciples, evades the people. He commands silence about his most remarkable miracles. In the very moment of his most splendid displays of power, he reminds his followers that he is presently to be betrayed and crucified.

And when that transcendent wonder, the resurrection of Lazarus, broke every barrier down, and the nation, abandoning every doubt—prejudice, resentment, division, all forgotten or cast away—cast itself at his feet

with loud hosannas, he refused to ride upon the whirlwind of their plaudits, or direct the storm of their zeal. He did nothing at their crisis, and calmly waited for his own. The mighty wave rolled on, to return no more. It left him stranded in Gethsemane. Then the love of man was seen to be quenched, and the confidence of the believers broken. The visible tokens of God's love departed, and the light of that dear and holy face glimmered a little while, shrank to a point, went out in agony and shame!

Thus we see Christ's persistent rejection of worldly popularity, because to win it would have been tempting God. And he who remembers what sins are incessantly committed, and by what believers, and in what awful Name, will see how fit and needful this example is, to warn us of a common and terrible mistake, and to make us renounce worldly applause as the object of a Christian's efforts or the method of his usefulness.

How glorious a nursing-mother of true men is that church whose sympathies are quick to the touch of every lawful emotion, and whose

voice is clear, honest, and therefore commanding on questions of duty and of sin! Her children trust her, and are not afraid. They know she prizes their pleasures, but even more, their peace. They weep their inevitable and wholesome tears in her shadow; they break forth into joy in her light. Her honor is their inheritance and glory. They "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and realize that "they prosper that love her."

Her influence disentangles them from the world, and makes straight paths for their feet. The silken tents of wickedness, whence issue the clash and shouts of feasting, and bursts of mad music thrill the air, have lost their charm. They know how soon the tent will be struck and taken away, and famine follow the feast, and silence drown the brazen blare of the trumpet.

But blessed is the very threshold of the spiritual church. Thither float the odors and incense of a pure offering. There is heard the King's voice responding to her worship. The balm of the heavenly Gilead, the rivers of consolation, the stay of weariness, the foun-

tain of strength, the spur and challenge of zeal, the armor and the stern joy of battle, the gleams of assured and swiftly descending victory, are all in her.

They fight the Lord's battle with the Lord's weapons—"not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." He, therefore, who surrenders to them knows exactly what he is doing—what he gives up, and what he undertakes. His thoughts of the Redeemer are exalted by the very fact that he demands "a living sacrifice." His soul is fired by the very greatness of the transition he is called upon to undergo. He sees that it is indeed a translation from one kingdom to another; from a kingdom of darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He finds no uncertain sound in the bugle of the gospel, and he prepares himself for the strife accordingly.

This clear and uniform mutual understanding maintains the spirit of the organization, enthrones a common conscience in the church, gives unity to its labors and its emotions, character to its deliverances, life in all the mem-

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bers, and glory for its Divine Head. And being thus in the very line of its duty, and of the fundamental purpose of the Lord the King, it is in the very channel of the blessing.

It is the spirit of our Master and Head which animates and sustains such a people. Jesus Christ was tempted to live like a demigod; he preferred (in the noble phrase of Rousseau) to die like a God.



THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” MATT. 4:8-10.

THE solution of the many and great difficulties which perplex us in this final temptation, seems to be, that the finest subtlety sometimes discards all subtlety, and appears as mere audacity. Nothing could be more unlike the preceding assaults, or more opposed to human expectations, than this insolent offer, which men have variously interpreted as a sneer, a defiance, a mere freak of desperation ; which has in it, indeed, the elements of all these, but is also more formidable, more profound, and therefore more fitted to reveal the

wisdom and the worth of Him against whom all craft and malice availed nothing.

Taken up in vision to an exceeding high mountain, Jesus saw displayed before him, in their most suggestive and stirring aspects, the glories of all the kingdoms of the world. It is probable that there was no slow and gradual process of unfolding—no shifting of panoramic landscapes, giving in detail the scenery and characteristics of the various nations, but a flashing forth of such topical objects, with their most telling surroundings, as to show him what tribute the world could lay at his feet, and what resources it could apply to render his gracious plans effective. For it is clear that much which might have been displayed would have been utterly irrelevant to the purpose that possessed his soul, and would therefore have only encumbered and disarmed the temptation itself.

Not what they then were, would the Son of Man so much consider, as what they might be made, and how they might be employed in the execution of his designs. And thus the riches of the mountain veins, the measureless

expanse of forest or of field, the cattle upon the hills, gems hidden in beds of rivers or barren sand, or flashing on the brow of kings, would play a very subordinate part in the vision as in his mind. The tempter, if he would so much as assail the virtue of Jesus, must set before him, divested of all idle trappings, the real elements of strength, for good as for evil, which the world could rally for him or against him. And he must offer to put the whole province and all its forces at "the glorious Eremite's" disposal, upon the simple acknowledgment of his own sovereignty.

The answer of Christ, it must be acknowledged, is perfect. It waives all consideration of price and temporary prudence. It utters his impatience—his holy abhorrence—of the sin by which he was to purchase a fallacious peace. It asserts the glorious monopoly of God, his sole right to worship and religious service. And now that the adversary has unmasked himself, he is no longer endured. "Get thee hence, Satan!" is the command; and the scowling tempter perforce obeys.

None the less is it our wisdom to look into

those things which Satan claimed without contradiction as his own—"That is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it," Luke 2:6—and to see what their true quality is, and how they have ever stood related to the kingdom of heaven. For as the key to much of the rashness and disobedience of men is in the first temptation, and the poison of worldly compliances lurks in the second, so here we have the plot of much subsequent history—sometimes the corruption, and sometimes the martyrdom of the church, the debasement and the destruction of nations.

The first glory of the kingdoms of this world—first in time, in seeming effectiveness, in the noise of lying fame—is the glory of military power.

We have no present need here, of common-places about the wickedness of war; chiefly because they are not only true, but are coming at last to be believed, though far, indeed, from being acted on. Whatever of them concerns us, will find its proper place below. I have now, however, to remark, that

it has unquestionably pleased God to employ wars as means of the advancement of Christ's cause. He has overturned, and will overturn, until HE whose right it is shall reign. He has beaten men with the smoking firebrand Rezin, and hewed them with his axe Sennacherib. His "glorious high throne from the beginning," the "place of our sanctuary," or refuge, has been raised higher and higher upon the wrecked thrones of kings. "The battle is the Lord's."

Thus, when God would comfort and encourage his ancient Israel, it is often with promises of judgment and deliverance resulting from war. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel! I will keep thee, saith the Lord, even thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them."

And yet nothing is more certain than that God has employed war, in executing his gra-

cious purposes, just as he has employed other crimes. Greed, ambition, and revenge, have swept men away, as with a foul and angry flood. The great conqueror has been usually the great pirate and murderer. Therefore, and to destroy the faintest semblance of collusion, the almost invariable law of history is, that *the attacking nation is in the wrong*; and where (as is too often the case) both have been in the wrong, the assailing power has been the greater criminal, and has put all of true virtue that the stricken people possessed upon an honest and often a martyr-like defence.

Never was there a more fallacious maxim than that victory is always the portion of the just. Very often—perhaps with few exceptions—it has gone the other way. And when the right has triumphed, as in our Revolutionary struggle, it has often been through complications elsewhere, so that the issue went at last by default. The progress of civilization, virtue, and the gospel, has been by defeats rather than successes. Sometimes, indeed, the handful of Zion's heroes has been the rock, and the world's armies have been the

assurgent wave rolling in but to be broken. But even then their success has been partial, and the ultimate benefits doubtful.

Perhaps no instance is more likely to be alleged against this position than that of Gustavus Adolphus, who intervened so gloriously in behalf of the Protestants of Germany and the religious liberties of mankind. Yet let us hear Bunsen as to the actual results. He is speaking of the Centenary of the Religious Peace of Augsburg:

"I feel sure that not a single Protestant preacher, nor a single congregation, will have referred to that event in an arrogant tone of triumph; for that peace accorded to us but a precarious existence, which was not changed into a more secure position until after a civil war of thirty years had been terminated by the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648, and that with many losses to the Protestant church of Germany. That peace [that is, of Westphalia] secured to Protestantism only a subordinate rank, which was first changed into that of equal brotherhood before the whole world in 1815. So long as that peace continued to be

the basis of our legal right to exist, the recognition of us by the law bore no proportion to our intrinsic and permanent power. Thus for two hundred years its anniversary offered us nothing but a sorrowful remembrance of a past age full of bloodshed and devastation, and a faint dawning of freedom of conscience.”*

We need not hesitate, therefore, to declare that, so far as war itself is a “glory,” it is Satan’s, and not Christ’s. He kindles man’s worst passions into a consuming fire. He makes the world reëcho with infernal voices of rage, of agony, of despair. And, in fact, Satan has continually employed this brutal mace of war against Christ and his church. To destroy the witnesses in Swiss valleys, and the villages of England, and upon the plains of Bohemia; to crush a devout and growing people, as in the Dutch Republic; to sap the spiritual life of a nation, as in instances without number; to fill the right hand of a lie with power, and tumble wholesome order into anarchy; there is no horror that Satan has not

* Signs of the Times, p. 371, Winkworth’s Translation.

wrought, and taught man to wreak upon his brother.

It is a fine saying of Hengstenberg, that the destruction of Jerusalem was "a microscopic view of the judgment, where everything was to be seen on a small scale, which at the actual end of the world was to appear in its proper greatness."* For it was war full-grown; war, grown to the full of puny man's dimensions, revealing what he is, without the restraints of hope and grace. When the *dies iræ* has fully come, what will the universe behold but the clash and horror transferred from the strife of man to that of a world which his sin has infected and his guilt has doomed? Mountains tumbling into a wild vortex of fire, the sea roaring up into the flaming heavens, the earth bursting, crumbling, and dissolving away—all these are simply war perfected, completing the ruin which man has incessantly begun.

Nevertheless, He who sitteth above the water-floods, is also seated above the flames, and is perfect Lord of all. He will but use

* Apoc. 40:8.

these mad elements to clear the way for the "new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is by these dreadful powers, freely and wickedly employed by man for man's own ends, and without one worthy thought of Him, that the mountains are brought low, and the valleys filled, and the rough places made plain, to make straight the way of the Lord Christ.

The distinction is thus made clear between the evil glory of war, which the Redeemer could not have accepted, even if it had been tendered as a humble tribute and without conditions; and that overruling and employment of it under ban, which is a marked characteristic of God's providential government, and which even demoniacal possession was not permitted to evade. We discover by the result—what we could not have imagined beforehand—that it becomes Him rather to set his "hook in the nostrils" of his malignant and rebellious subject, and lead him whither he will, though he lash the waters into foam, and fill them for the appointed

time with mire and blood, than simply to imprison or destroy him.

Physical force as a religious weapon, used upon the side of religion and in its name, has been more deadly to the oppressor than to his victim. It is essentially the denial and exclusion of the motives relevant to religion. Just so far as it succeeds, it brings in the era of unbelief and a carnal mind upon the victorious people, and prepares the general frame for the dry rot of practical atheism. And as to those against whom it is directed, the greater the apparent success, the more absolute the real failure. Stirring and true is the maxim, whether technically sound or not, that "his free moral personality is the image of God in man." And it would be as wise to attempt perfecting man's physical beauty by driving the hoof of the warhorse into his upturned face, as to attempt his improvement in opinion and affection by means of sword and torch.

And yet it is by tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God. Military oppression and bloody violence have been the throttle-

valve which turns the steam from waste-pipe to cylinder. They evoke a strength which they can neither possess nor create. They drop the spark, but the power and the bolt and the thunder are alike faith's, that is to say, God's. In the *endurance* of them, there is indeed a glory and a beauty not of this world. The heart that is "dumb because thou didst it;" the affections that wrap themselves but the more closely about the helpless objects of persecution and contempt, and bind their hopes and sacrifices to the throne of God by prayer; the streaming eyes of submission and filial duty, whose very tears are telescopic, and bring nigh the land of peace and the King in his beauty; the spirit which weighs every earthly possession and joy against truth and right, and bids the whole tempting world a resolute farewell; this is the grace that overcomes and blesses the world. It scatters with its blood the seeds of virtue, of peace, of holiness, for the ages to come. It manifests the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

It was by a visible defeat that Christ himself conquered. When he stooped his gentle head to the yoke, and laid his mighty hand under the nail of the cross; when his dear and tender body was broken, and his faithful blood poured out, the sceptre of Satan parted at his hand. The dim tabernacle fell, but the glory of the Lord ascended to its zenith. The death of the material frame brought in the everlasting triumph of spirit and life.

And as is the type, so is the class; after the head the members. No rich and prosperous church has ever been as glorious as those that were oppressed and trodden down. And though a different day is promised when the tribute of the kings of the earth will not corrupt, nor temporal power debase, it is spoken of an age which will differ from the present in kind, as well as in degree. While we cannot refuse the burden of strength, influence, honor, riches, if they should be laid upon us, we must not misunderstand their intrinsic quality, or mistake them for prosperity. They are the Greek fire of the Christian warfare. Thrown rightly against the

enemy, they are decisive missiles indeed; but with careless handling they destroy the possessor.

The second glory of the kingdoms is statecraft.

It is a truth beyond controversion that the spirit which consolidates, inspires, and commands a great kingdom, as the world now is, must be a spirit of *this world*. Even when it is righteousness that exalteth a nation, that righteousness is of morals rather than of religion—is rectitude, and not piety. This is involved in the Saviour's declaration: "My kingdom is not of this world." The difference between them is radical. The motives accepted and employed by the law, the principles of international policy, the tests of worth, the rewards of service, bear no marks of kindred in the two dispensations.

Let us concede that there can hardly be a finer object of earthly ambition than genuine political power, which is the fruit, not of material force, but of mental and moral strength, of courage, wisdom, and will. To control the

people for their good; to inlay the constitution with precious laws; to wield the solid mass of its resources as it were a stone in a sling; to secure right and order; to elevate civilization; to refine manners; to dispense knowledge: these have been the passions of the noblest minds. They have been the pretext and palliation of their crimes, as well as the self-promised reward of their sacrifices.

But it is evident that in the present dispensation, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord" only in the sense of an overmastering control and strong possessory hand. Their "glory," even at their best estate, is such a tarnished and carnal glory, that he can only shake his spotless robes clear of all combination with them, and bide his time of judgment and renovation.

Internally, the kingdoms of the world are in their very idea kingdoms of law. His is a kingdom of "mercy," pardon, regeneration. What is called mercy in the occasional pardon of criminals is not such in any strictness, but a confession of the imperfectness of human laws and the probable errors of human justice.

Externally, the kingdoms of this world are essentially *a trust*; the relations of the several peoples are to be regulated by their rulers for the especial good of that particular people committed to each one. Christ's kingdom is a pure sovereignty, in which the opinion of any subject is not even represented, except as it is itself a reproduction of Divine truth.

This radical unlikeness at once explains and demonstrates the impossibility of amalgamating church and state on any terms and in any mode. Their principles can no more be incorporated with each other than can the limbs or features of different men.

It also sets forth the fatefulness of our error, if we apply to the interests and mission of the church the methods of state-craft. Diplomacy, wire-pulling, secret management, are abhorrent to true faith—whose weapons are simplicity, godly sincerity, gentleness of spirit, and zeal and holy jealousy that cannot compromise with sin; which knows no temporizing but patience, and whose reconciliations are recovery, repentance, forgiveness.

This glory of the kingdoms of the world is

thus seen to be as alien to the purposes and odious to the royal heart of Jesus as the first. Its tawdry hues might adorn the adversary, but not "the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God," our Saviour.

But there is a third glory, of which the church is hardly yet convinced that she cannot make it her own. It is that of art.

Since man first discovered the beauty of the earth—and especially those beauties which are altogether dissociated from use—he has striven to give shape and utterance to his own beautiful conceptions. To reproduce, by means of a painted flower, the sensation of delight which the untoiling lilies of the field awaken; to suggest grandeurs which we cannot repeat; to combine in completer forms the exquisite but scattered details of nature; to call into play the spiritual sensibilities by means of form, or hue, or shadow: these are the worthier objects of the art of painting. And similar accounts may be given of the other fine arts—sculpture, architecture, and music.

It is not surprising that men have so earnestly desired and hoped to levy upon art for the advancement of religion. Why should not God, who demanded of Israel the first-fruits of every harvest, be worshipped also with the best works of taste and achievements of beauty? They forget to inquire whether there may not be a deeper necessity for the prohibitions of the second commandment than any supposed peculiar proclivity of the Jewish race to idols; whether there is not an inward and natural connection between religious art and false religion.

Look one moment at the facts. Not one of the great temples in the world is in any emphatic sense a temple of living religion. Few of them are so in any sense. Not one of the great paintings, the work of the so-called religious art, makes a true presentation of the facts. They are either wholly legendary, or pervert the facts to glorify the antichristian ecclesiasticism of Rome.* And though it might not be just to make as sweeping a

*.Perhaps the "Last Supper" should be excepted. Its details are not distinct in the writer's mind.

charge against the finest works of music, it will not be denied that the sublimest sensations awakened by the noblest oratorio terminate with the notes that called them forth; they rarely make man more devout, more amiable, more conscientious.

And the explanation is not far to seek. The proper field of art is the sentiments. The field of religion is the principles and affections. The office of the one is to gratify the refined senses, to give wings to fancy, to play on superficial sensibilities. The mission of the other is to probe and purify the soul, to feed the imagination with sublimest truths, to call in the truant affections and lift them to the invisible. The innate tendency of the one is to fix attention upon externals, to expend shallow emotions upon idle tears or smiles, and therefore to condone inward imperfections for a lovely seeming. The vital principle of the other is the principle of an inner and spiritual life—that only that is truly good, which is good within; it serves a God who

“abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found.”

Do not imagine that this is a denunciation of art. It is only a reduction of it to its proper place, and an indication where its dangers and the adversary's snares lie hid.

While our Father's "morning smiles adorn the day;" while he draws the dewy veil that Israel may sleep, and burnishes the stars, and arrays the clouds, and sets the auroral glow in the sky, no enlightened mind can despise beauty or scoff at music. And yet, after all, these are but the casual accompaniments of things profoundly useful in themselves, whose depths man's mind is only beginning to explore, and whose riches he has barely touched, though he has lived upon them. But human nature incessantly tends *to the surface*. Idle pleasure is the goal of its desires. It prefers looking *at* nature to looking "*through* nature up." Now art, when it is innocent, falls in with this tendency. It superficializes the attention; and by arousing at the same time the sentiments, the shallow counterfeit of emotion, flatters the soul that it delights.

It is here, no doubt, that we come upon the explanation of the fact which has astonished

and grieved many amiable hearts: that—with many even illustrious exceptions, I rejoice to admit—professional artists in any art are not, as a class, of high character, and appear even peculiarly liable to those vices which exhilarate and distract the mind. Their disease is a hypertrophy of the sentiments and fancy. They suffer from a drain of vital force from all parts of the system to a non-vital organ.

And then, inasmuch as sentiment is as easily the mask of passion as the decoration of virtue—and as man is far more prone to passion than to virtue—sentiment continually lends its glow, its softness, its eloquence, its beautiful fictions, to dress what things are worst and vilest among men in a glory not their own. The zenith of art was Athens; and at that very time Athens was dead alike to moral principle and to spiritual religion.

Not for such aids could that pure head stoop. Not the loveliness that could be put on was bright to his eyes, but that which unfolds by a living and spontaneous growth from within. Art, like the other kings of the earth, must bring her lowly tribute to his feet,

not venture to call herself his ally. And when she has seen his precious things, and taken account of his wisdom and glory, like the queen of Sheba before King Solomon, there remains no more life in her but to confess his infinite preëminence. "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom! Blessed be Jehovah thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king." 1 Kings, ch. 10.

One other "glory of the kingdoms" must be mentioned—philosophy, including that department which the ancient world barely knew, and did not know how to cultivate; that is, *science*.

It is idle to speculate what philosophy and science would have been, if man had not fallen; whether the realm of pure reason could have been a realm of pure truth, in a world where the mind labors under limitations of sense, and must obtain four-fifths of its terms

from things inferior and generically unlike; where both experiment and calculation grow transcendental and unmanageably subtle; where language limps after thought, and thought is cumbered by the body. But when to these intrinsic difficulties are added the bias of sin and the blind of pride, it is manifest that here also Christ cannot find a partner, but only a servant; and that, a servant wayward, wilful, precarious, untrue.

The history of philosophy (taking the word still in its largest sense) is a history of self-corrections under new light. And the greatest men have spent much of their best force in divesting the wisdom of the world of its favorite errors; so that the term *discovery* is almost a sarcasm. "Where is the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world? Hath not God brought to naught" their wisdom?

Yet it has done wonders in its way. It has refined and corrected language as an instrument of thought. It has penetrated into many of the secrets of nature; not merely penetrated, but grouped and ranked them in relative importance, reflected the light of some on

others, reciprocally enhancing their radiance; so that the world is becoming a vase of spar illuminated from within, whose veins and flecks and hidden beauties glow before the trained and exulting eye.

The stars confess to us, though they will not obey us. The winds warn us—and then beat us down. The secret force of nature appears in response to our summons, but never in her proper person; her representatives make answer for her as they will, and we can only note and infer and try again.

Logic is as yet uncertain whether all knowledge is inductive, or only a part of it.

Geology begins to be afraid that she does not yet know how granite and other primary rocks were formed; and is just confessing that her demonstrations of the comparative age of rocks, based upon their fossil contents, are no demonstration at all.

And, to crown all, natural history is in high debate over the origin of man and the origin of life; whether she shall hold, with one of her rabbis, that though man's body might have been developed out of a brute's, his

moral nature is all his own; or with another, that there is quite human nature enough in the beasts to prove our inheritance from them.

Is it necessary to pause upon metaphysics, which almost monopolizes the name philosophy? What has it ever learned which it has not been compelled to unlearn, except the old Socratic lesson of our ignorance? What theories has it not held, proved, disproved, scorned, battered, reestablished, and torn down again? The bald, humiliating truth is, that philosophy is hardly a department of knowledge at all, but the distillation and elixir of human thought in any given age.

Its relations to the gospel and true religion, therefore, have only occasionally been kindly. It habitually flatters the pride of reason, which revelation continually humbles. It labors with incorrigible zeal to establish a theory of man which shall not need the fall, the cross, or the Spirit's grace. It denounces the bigotry of the church, because itself is tolerant of everything but the Bible and the scheme of salvation for man as lost.

Nevertheless, it has pleased God not to

leave himself without witness here also. In almost every age he has chosen some champion of knowledge to be a soldier of the cross, and compelled an unwilling world to see that the different departments of wisdom need not be hostile to each other. He has laid the double honor on the Newtons and Pascals and their like, of teaching earthly and teaching heavenly truth. And all this is, plainly, because it was intended that man should learn and reason, and climb by the very stars to the feet of God. His noblest powers are well expended in widening the tracts or purifying the sources of knowledge; in opening the sealed fountains of thought, of enlightened pleasure, of power and of self-culture, to the thousands of his brethren.

But he only can do this work well whose gifts are baptized with grace. His heart must have faith as his mind must have reason. He must delight in Christ, if he would worthily admire God, or teach others to admire. And when he has done this, he will find that though the world may not cease to applaud him, it will have ceased to understand him. In the

view of the world, his position will appear to have become equivocal, as though his piety and his philosophy were opposed to each other. And doubtless some of the ideas drawn from one source will clash with some drawn just as honestly from the other source. Are we not expressly told, in respect to our knowledge here, that "we know in part"? and that it is partial in such a sense that it "shall be done away"? Does not the mere man of science often come upon appearances that clash with preconceived truths; and is it not his wisdom to suspend judgment until the decisive experiment or observation occurs? This patience is our right and duty as well as his.

Thus, turn where we will amid the glories of the kingdoms of the world, we find things precious for tribute, but valueless as price. Let the Lord command, and his behest dignifies and adorns. Put them outside of his kingdom, and they are not only worthless but pernicious.

Yet what a vision that must have been! The marshalled hosts, arrayed in all those

shapes of power which the ambition and genius of mankind have given to its armies—legions, phalanxes, whirlwinds of cavalry, clouds of arrows; walls and towers like ranges of hills; fleets like great islands in the sea: and a word shall wield them all. Nations growing great by wisdom, spreading a benign sway from province to province, as the light of the sun advances over the world; stately cities, teeming fields, noble highways; violence disarmed and disappearing; education and letters rising in a procreant tide, prolific of liberty, virtue, and domestic peace: all waiting to be claimed and wielded by him. Sharp obelisks shoot up; domes crown the cities, and spires add the only grace they lacked to verdant plains; the Parthenon shines like a white star from its hill. Sweet lights charm the canvas; perfect forms take the still marble; bursts of ravishing music ring upon the ear. While just below, in groves and cloisters, the sage, the genius, the man of learning, and the man of creative power bend to the studies of their choice, prepared to acknowledge or defy their Lord.

And to whom are all these splendors shown "in a moment of time"? To a lonely, famishing, and helpless man, who came to be a king, yet has not one subject, one protector against persecution: who has not so much as tasted food for long weeks! Here, so far as man can see, are all the powers and appliances of the world waiting his acceptance; the problem solved; the long, long day of victory ready to begin!

Does it still seem incredible that Satan should have attempted such an approach? Waiving the question whether the Adversary knew all that we know, or would have ventured on the temptation if he had known it, there are three matters to be mentioned on which he may have placed reliance, and from which there are lessons to be drawn for ourselves.

The first is, that a temptation which would easily be resisted if gradually approached, often overwhelms us by a *sudden rush*. It is probable that it was this element of suddenness, of surprise, acting upon relaxed and drowsy frames, that overthrew the courage

and loyalty of the disciples, so that "they all forsook Him and fled."* A surge of passion—it may be anger, covetousness, lust—what may it not be?—has many times borne away, apparently without a struggle, the believer whom great temptations, rising slowly, had not moved. And though these chiefly rise from within, out of our own corruptions, in which the stainless Jesus had no part; yet sorrows, disasters, provocations, great successes within reach of our hand, have done the same work.

Herein lies the subtlety of the Wicked One, who has studied man profoundly and not, alas, in vain. He flies upon us in a sudden combat, and discomfits us. The powers which should have met and baffled him are lying unstrung and nerveless, and before they can be strained up for the fight it is lost!

And surely, if an unexpected onset could have prevailed with Jesus, this amazing vision of all earth has of power, greatness, and delight would have overborne him. Rest for

* See Christ's word: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

toil, luxury for want, homage of innumerable subjects, instead of this lonely obscurity, a benign and spreading sway, a world to order in peaceful and stately grades of mutual help and honor—all, all crowding upon the eye and appealing to every capability in man—it was all this, flashing out of the blank, throbbing in dizzy glories upon the air, covering the vast area at his feet with the riches and the forces of a world; on this Satan counted, and counted in vain! The faithfulness of Jesus was a vigilant faithfulness. He could not be betrayed, who could not be surprised.

Another feature of the case which probably encouraged the tempter, was *the weakness and bodily suffering* of Jesus; for he was now “a hungered.” In periods of great exhaustion, especially from want of food, the tremulous brain swims with visions; objects around grow unreal, while fantasies put on substance; purposes are shaken; aims once clearly seen are dimmed or forgotten. Thoughts that have previously harassed the mind, now gain new power—unfold dusky wings—sweep out like storm-clouds, and take possession of the sky.

Exhaustion is a disease, and it shares with other diseases the evil privilege of unseating the throned will, of dizzying the peremptory reason, and thus of opening ways of near and perilous access to the cruel deceiver of men.

Every Christian pastor finds this fact in the round of his labors: Satan, "lying in wait to deceive," and, like the leopard from which the figure is borrowed, springing oftenest upon the crippled, the sick, the straggling of the flock. Religious despondency is often thus wrought upon the feeble invalid; for our enemy has no pity upon our languishing and pain. The man who has, through God's grace, broken the chains of intemperance, and stood up, Christ's freeman, meeting with disappointments and sorrows, yields to the tempter's wiles, and plunges back into the pit of shame from which he was lifted.

And we need not doubt that the fact that our dear Master's frame had been tried to the very utmost of endurance by want and watching, and his mind by perplexity, contest, and the pressure of a determined will, encouraged

the hope which was doomed to so utter defeat. His loyalty could not be shaken, because it was his very life. That was to be proved—and it was proved—by the experiment.

A third principle of human nature, and the last I shall mention, on which the hope of this temptation turned is, that *many a resisting heart is caught in the rebound.*

When one has well fought against some strong seduction, and finally overthrown and banished it from his soul, just then and there arises a peculiar danger. The muscles will relax when the strain of some great effort is over, whether they be muscles of the outer or the inner man. Vigilance declines; comfort springs up; the sense of assured safety in victory steals over the mind; rare and happy is he who has not a dash of self-complacency in his joy. Thus it continually happens, alike in our temporal and spiritual conflicts, that a worse defeat is prepared for us by the defeat we have escaped. The fired gun recoils, and the cannon not seldom dismounts itself. The beaten army resurgent, sweeps away the con-

queror. We stand up in the surf, and the undertow drowns us.

The old Christian has learned all this by sad experience; but the young Christian needs many a warning. He lifts his head in self-congratulation, because he has resisted manfully; and the uplifted head cannot take heed to his ways—one moment of exultation, and he is down! He would not be impatient, and therefore he is proud. He refused to be covetous, and that makes him vain. He learns to say No, and thereby grows presumptuous and self-willed. And these inflations of the mind make him far more liable than before to misjudge duty, and to patronize and glorify himself.

Many years ago, I read a pitiful story of a missionary in Hindostan, who had taken refuge with his family from a sudden storm in the mouth of a cavern. Mysterious sounds from within proved presently to be the mew-ing and scratching of certain tiger-cubs, for the cavern was a tiger's den, to which the terrible beasts must soon return. Hastening forth, they seized the first slight subsidence

of the storm to cross by a slender, fallen tree a deep chasm that ran in front, and then, uniting all their force, pushed the tree from its holdings, so that, slowly turning in the air, it crashed and was broken upon the rocks beneath. Hardly was this done before the tigress appeared; and seeing them there, sprang after them with a mighty roar, and caught by her fore-paws only upon the nearer edge of the gulf. The missionary, seeing no other help, rushed upon her, literally tore her loose from the ragged rock-edge to which she clung with claws and teeth, and the abyss received her. But in the agony of that supreme effort he had leaned too far to recover, caught vainly about for some support, and with a last sob went down and was dashed to death.

So, though never quite to death, fall many through the very stress and vehemence of their struggle against temptation. So, doubtless, the adversary hoped it would prove with the Champion against whom nothing else availed. The danger in such a case is great, just in proportion as it is *we only* who strug-

gle on the basis of our own resolutions and in our personal strength. He whose whole will was to please his Father, ran no real risk. It was easy to him to say, "Get thee hence, Satan! it is written, THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD; AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE."

It remains only to indicate the fact that these various and subtle snares were escaped by *simple obedience*. There is no trace upon the record that any other consideration was even looked upon but the will of the Father. To regard that is of course and always the highest wisdom, and precludes the necessity of any other light on that particular point. When Eve "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise;" that is to say, when she took these facts into view, and allowed them weight upon a question which God's command had settled, the fall was already begun.

But it is exceedingly important to notice that these refusals were not mere isolated

acts; they were the necessary result of that *state of obedience* for which, perhaps, our best name is loyalty.

Let the philosophers ring the changes as they may upon immanent and emanent, general and particular, volitions, and whatever other terms their ingenuity supplies, common sense recognizes the difference between a casual, right act, and that rooted habit of the soul that, as Luther said of himself, "can do no other." It is only by the invariable forces that any stable equilibrium can be effected in nature; and even so is an established integrity impossible without an open and final sway of sound moral principle.

But morals are merely the contingent remainder of religion; so much of duty as can survive, when only things below are regarded. Nowhere is the round of right complete, except where both affections and actions are arrayed about their original centre, the throne of Him who is King, Father, Teacher, Friend, all in one.

This is precisely what our Lord continually reminded us of concerning himself: "I do al-

ways the things that please my Father." "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "The Son can do nothing but what he seeth the Father do;" and so on through many forms of speech. And Paul grandly characterizes His whole course for our example when he says, "Even Christ pleased not himself."

To a heart thus ordered, thus welded to the Perfect Will in heaven, temptation, however glozing, however urgent, became a very simple thing. Wilt thou leave thy deep peace, thy free conscience, thy happy and stainless love, the covenant which is thine everlasting stay, the smile of God, the joy set before thee, for any show of good? The answer is a foregone conclusion. Though it lay hold of the dearest object and noblest passion of the soul; though it dress itself in any garb of promise, in any hope of results, however longed for; though it have every feature of glory and of wisdom but the one—"it is not in the commandment"—that one defect shall disenchant it all, and deliver a heart like that of Jesus from all the toils of the devil.

It is thus that all laws finally resolve themselves into the one "first law" of Order. Whatever thing there be that God has made, he has made it under clear conditions and in exact relations to other things and to his will and glory; that is, to himself. And this is in each case according to its kind. If the thing be mere matter, its intrinsic relations are physical; if animated, vital; if spiritual, moral and religious. But each must stand right with respect to Him, in order that it may stand right to its coördinates. Its own orbit is its only safe place.

How sublime a conception is this, of a whole universe perfectly thought out and brought into being; where every creature, yea, and every atom, has its allotted place and law and work! Cycles and epicycles of service, honor, joy; worlds on worlds expending "sweet influences" of attraction and support, and pouring back upon the resplendent centre the radiance they had received! What flowers of loveliness; what myriad flecks of lowly beauty, in number without number; what ceaseless flow of lustre, tint, translucence, convolved,

intervolved, unfolding, netted over lapsing seas of life and happy action ; what endless being born, and living for ever, of all noble and rejoicing creatures, would make up the story of such a universe, let the blossoms, the dews, the inestimable riches of life even in this world shadow forth to us ; for it is but a broken shadow, because of sin.

Now the obedience of Jesus was *let into* the general mass of unbelief and ungodliness, as a revelation by contract and an invitation by example. And he has studied his gospel rightly who has learned from it the wisdom and the beauty of obedience.

Suppose that in the stellar world, congeries of systems as it is, a planet-member of some solar system should become displaced. It draws with it its satellites. It unsettles the orderly movement and reciprocal influence of its sister-spheres. It begins to drag the whole beautiful array into disorder ; that is, into ruin. Its own internal laws will partake of the insurrection ; the air poisoned, the blood fevered, the mystic forces of life broken here and doubled yonder ; fires let loose, seas turned upon

the shores, night and day unsettled—chaos come again.

All this, I know, has been better said a thousand times; but I wish to raise the question, How shall such deadly disturbances be most effectually and happily quelled? The disorder, as we saw, has spread far beyond the original planet which strayed from its way. No mere replacement would meet the emergency. What is the least infraction of general law that could be looked to to operate a cure? Clearly, *a transference of the sun to the new centre.*

There always is a centre. Let the bodies scatter as widely and in as mad confusion as they may, there is always a point at which their conflicting forces balance each other, and where a centre of attraction and revolution may be set. Then the obedient worlds would find their new orbits and learn their appointed times. Then chaos would subside to order, and Death deposed would become but the "usher of the black rod" to Life, the King.

And is not this, in one aspect at least, what

God has done to redeem the world from sin and death? Christ as Mediator is the sun in a new place. The orbit of the Law being lost, we are drawn now into the orbit of the Gospel. Original goodness is lost, the natural possibility of holiness is lost, the very footing of citizenship in God's kingdom is lost. Nor are they restored to us in such kind as they were or might have been. For righteousness before the law, we have justification. For spontaneous goodness, we have grace.

And as these come from Christ, he appears as the central figure not only of the scheme, but of the hopes, trust, homage, love, allegiance of those whom the scheme affects. We obey God by being the disciples of Christ.

But the facts we have been considering, and that to which we are now brought, belong respectively to the two members of that sublime and blessed paradox, *redemption* by an *incarnate God*. As man, he suffered being tempted. As God, he commands us to resist temptation. Having, through years of undeserved humiliation and gracious toil, won our confidence and attracted our sympathies to

himself, he soars aloft, and our eyes follow him. Behold, he has taken the throne! The Father acknowledges his equal Son. The Spirit is sent by him, and sets up his kingdom. The innumerable host of angels adore and obey him.

Now, therefore, he who sets on the throne of his heart the Lord who is set on the throne of heaven, falls in with the counsels of the Father, breathes the very mind of the Spirit, and is in harmony again with the holy, worshipping angels. Being justified and being sanctified, the lost harmony is restored in his case. He is no more a stranger and a foreigner, but fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God.

And indeed his place of peace is not even withheld from him until the work of sanctification is completed. The King answers for him, accepts him, claims him as his own. Thus the secret of his growing life, of his ripening holiness, of his daily joy, is the eye of faith fixed upon Christ. Through Him he resists the devil, and his cruel enemy flees from him. Through Him he beats down his

flesh, and brings it into subjection. Through Him, and gazing with unveiled face on Him, he is changed into His image from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit. "FOR WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW, HE ALSO DID PREDESTINATE TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN."



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