

THE TEMPTATION OF
OUR LORD

BY THE LATE

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I.

THE TEMPTER

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”—MATT. iv. 1.

I WISH to offer a few thoughts on the Temptation of our Lord, as a contribution to the practical study of this deeply interesting portion of the Gospel history.

In what light are we to consider this transaction? Was it a trial of principle which addressed itself to our Lord from within, through his conceptive faculty presenting

certain possibilities of wrong-doing, involving temptation to evil, which, however, would not itself be evil unless yielded to by the will? Can we account for this dread occurrence by any such inward thoughts or suggestions, coming from the soul of the pure and sinless Jesus, and these too being such a source of suffering to Him; or by the theory of a vision created by his imagination; or by accepting the narrative as a parable or myth, symbolical of the operation of the principle of evil in the soul of man?

Instead of these and other theories, I believe the temptation to have been historically true;* and that the suggestions to evil were

* I refer with pleasure to the authority of the lamented Dean Alford, who, in his notes on the passage, says—"The whole is

put before Christ by an evil person whose will had chosen to be guided by evil. This is certainly the impression which the narrative conveys. It is recorded by three of the Evangelists, but omitted by St. John, not, I think, because his Gospel was intended more especially to reveal the Divine Son of God, and therefore One who was not liable to temptation, but because it is supplementary to the other Gospels, and does not therefore repeat events which they have sufficiently narrated. St. Mark does not give any detailed account of the Temptation. He simply and briefly records the mere fact, and that in terms which leave no doubt that he recog-

undoubtedly an objective historical narrative, recording an actual conflict between our Redeemer and the power of evil."

nised it as a real transaction. He says, "He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him." The "wilderness" and the "wild beasts" are thus not alluded to as things more real than "Satan" and the "angels." It must be remembered, too, that whatever impressions were received by the Evangelists regarding the Temptation must have been conveyed to them by Christ Himself; for there were no spectators of that mysterious scene, nor did any eye besides his own discern what was taking place, not only in the Wilderness, but in the unseen world. The story must either have been told substantially to them as we have it, or have been fabricated by themselves, and

embodied among the events of the life of our Lord—a supposition at variance not merely with the lowest notion of their divine inspiration, but with belief in their being possessed of common honesty. To all this evidence of the historical reality of the narrative—and very much more might be adduced—we must add the entire harmony subsisting between it and other momentous events of the past and subsequent history of the kingdom of God, which I will endeavour to point out as we proceed.

Meantime I shall confine myself to an investigation regarding the existence of the Tempter.

That any such wicked spirit as the devil is

represented to be, should exist in the universe of God, I frankly admit to be indeed a great mystery, and one which it may be impossible at present to explain. But for myself, I cannot see it to be a greater mystery than the existence of wicked persons in this redeemed world of light, of life, of glory. I can indeed conceive of beings, inhabiting a world into which no evil had ever entered, who, through faith and obedience, possessed such a knowledge of God and of the glory of his character and purposes, as to make it difficult for them to imagine how any responsible or rational beings elsewhere who had heard of the same living God, should not share their feelings of reverential awe and profound admiration towards Him; and whose scepticism, accord-

ingly, if they had any, would not be as to the possible existence elsewhere of others like-minded, but of persons anywhere who could be differently minded from themselves. But that we, in a world like this, in which every one who has ever existed, but One, has been a sinner; in which temptation is rife; in which vice often so triumphs over virtue as to make some question the supremacy of law and government in the universe;—a world where iniquity runs riot, and genius fails to exhaust itself in ever creating new and horrible forms of it;—that the inhabitants, I say, of such a world as this should be sceptical, not as to the existence of good angels or of holy persons in any other sphere, but as to the possible existence of personalities as

wicked even as themselves, seems to me to imply a degree of moral blindness almost sufficient of itself to suggest the existence of a wicked Tempter to account for it.

But after all conjectures on the subject are exhausted, we must fall back upon authentic information, if there be any such, as to the existence of a personal evil spirit;—just as we seek information from the honest and competent traveller regarding the existence and character of the inhabitants of some distant island, or of some hitherto unknown portion of the globe, which he alone has visited. Now it is a remarkable fact that our chief sources of information regarding the existence of the devil are the Gospel narratives, including not only the teaching of Jesus Christ Him-

self, but also of the Apostles who spoke in his name. Not in the Old Testament do we hear most about Satan. It is not indeed silent regarding his existence, for he appears in the very first record of the history of man; and there are several indications in other portions of it, as in the Book of Job, proving a knowledge of and current belief in his being. But yet the fact remains, that to Jesus and his Apostles we owe the principal part of our knowledge of the devil and his work. And here let me say that it is impossible to account for this on the supposition of a personal evil spirit being the creation, as many allege it to be, of a dark and therefore superstitious age. It is quite true that a rude and barbarous people, contending, as such a people

must ever do, with such adverse powers of nature as hunger and thirst, storm and darkness, disease and death, are likely to attribute all these to some present and unseen power opposed to man's happiness. And hence the demon-worship and "religion" of fear which has everywhere existed, and the offering up of human sacrifices, as in the case of some of the aboriginal tribes in India and in various other places, who seek thus to appease wrath by satisfying the love of suffering attributed to the deity of hate, whom they consequently fear and worship.

But if such a prince of darkness be the creation only of persons living in darkness—if such an object of fear from without be nothing but the personification of supersti-

tious fear within—why is there so little said about the devil in the Old Testament, and in those early and comparatively ignorant and dark ages? How is it, on this supposition, that our knowledge of the wicked one comes, as I have said, from those to whom we owe all our highest knowledge of the character of God and of spiritual religion; whose mission was one of love, to deliver men from the bondage of ignorance, “the power of darkness,” and from the “fear which hath torment?” Why is it that the Apostle John—of all the Apostles!—so eminently spiritual in his teaching, so eminently the apostle of love, should allude so frequently to the evil one, and be the author of the book of Revelation, which, whatever may be its

meaning, assumes from first to last the existence and mighty power of the devil? All this can be accounted for on the supposition only that there is such a being, whom it was not for man's good, however, to have more clearly revealed to him, until the time came when there was also revealed the Lord of light, of life, and of peace, who came to destroy his works, and to furnish us with weapons by which we can resist and "overcome the wicked one."

The earliest fact recorded by three of the Evangelists is this one of the temptation of our Lord by the devil. Our Lord Himself, in all his teaching, declares the existence, agency, and power of the devil:—as when He tells us, for example, that he "was the enemy that sowed

the tares;" that the tares "are the children of the wicked one;" that "the devil takes the good seed of the word out of the heart," &c. We must add, moreover, his testimony regarding the influence of wicked spirits in connection with demoniacal possessions. For whatever be the history of those mysterious forms of suffering, it can hardly be questioned that Jesus Christ, in speaking of and dealing with them, gives us the impression that He was not coming in contact with mere forms of physical or moral disease, but with wicked personal spirits, with whom He held most significant conversations, and who were driven out of wretched sufferers, in one case, at least, entering by his permission into other bodies. Quite in harmony with this is the history of

these demons having—but only *after the temptation*—confessed Him as the “Son of God.” For example, in the fourth chapter of St. Luke, which records the temptation of our Lord, we have the two following narratives:—“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” “And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And He, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ.” And the life of Christ on earth is described as being that of

one who "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."

If we pass from the testimony of Jesus to the other records of the New Testament, we have the same evidence continued. In the book of Acts, which has been called the Gospel of the Spirit, dealing, as it chiefly does, with the work of the Holy Ghost in the church after Pentecost, there are many references to the existence and power of the devil. When the Christian church was being organised, "Satan" is said to have "filled the heart of Ananias to lie." The work of an Apostle is described as turning the people "from the power of Satan to God." In all the Epistles too there are constant references to the same wicked one. He is called "the god of this

world," "the prince of darkness," "the liar and murderer from the beginning," our "adversary the devil," &c. St. John says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and he speaks of young men who were strong, and had therefore "overcome the wicked one." In the book of Revelation, which professes, amongst other things, to deliver messages to the churches from Jesus Christ, Smyrna is called a "synagogue of Satan," and Pergamos, "Satan's seat," "where Satan dwelleth." It is said of him there, "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have

tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And the millennium is ushered in by the "binding of the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and Satan." And thus revelation begins and ends with the recognition of his existence, wickedness, and power.

Now, the Bible professes to reveal facts, not to create them. It reveals them as the telescope reveals things otherwise unseen—as the existence, for example, of a distant foe. We may reject the testimony of Scripture, and by some process explain away all the grounds of our faith in the existence of the devil; but we do not thereby get quit of what is just as awful. All that is earthly, sensual, and devilish in human

nature; all the evil which our conscience cannot but condemn; all the evil which is from without and manifested through the senses—the spiritual wickedness of malice, envy, jealousy, lying, selfishness, and hatred to God and man—all these would still remain as facts in human history. Bible or no Bible, devil or no devil, sin exists in every form, in every city and village, among every class, blinding us, hardening us, and making “the king’s sons embrace dunghills.” Nay, it does not lessen, but rather increases the mystery of evil, and makes us more hopeless of our deliverance from it, to deny the existence of a wicked tempter from without us, though working in us, an alien to man, an enemy who hath done, and still does this

injury to us. To account for evil by an inherent wickedness in human nature—a taint natural to it and incurable—a doom under which we must lie—is surely not more in harmony with experience, with our hopes of ultimate good, than the existence of a personal evil spirit, who tempts to evil, and seeks to destroy our souls as surely as he sought to destroy that of Jesus!

But the silence of Scripture regarding Satan is as remarkable as the information it gives about him. Outside the Bible we have descriptions of him conceived among a rude people, in rude ages, and embodied in song and legend, calculated not so much to inspire fear as to excite to laughter or contempt,—descriptions in which the evil one is

represented as a half wicked, half idiotic creature, the bugbear of peasants and of children, with a certain amount also of playful cunning and a sense of the ludicrous. We have also creations of a higher and very different type, like that of the fallen angel of Milton, the grand personification of majestic power and high intellect without love, choosing evil for its good, and suffering the punishment of "everlasting fire;" or like that of the Mephistophiles of "Faust," with his intellectual wiles, bitter sarcasm, and mean falsehood, communicating with lofty and unseen powers of good and evil, and yet, if we may say it, little better than an unprincipled *roué*. But no such details are given in Scripture. Nor does Revelation answer questions regarding

Satan which man's curiosity might naturally prompt, such as :—What are the conditions of his existence, the degree of his responsibility, or the extent of his power? In what respect does he differ from human beings who possess soul, spirit, and body? What is his past history? How does he stand related to the Son of God, “by whom all things were created, visible and invisible?” When and how did he fall? By what thoughts and conceptions was he induced to attempt to solve the problem of life without God? What displays have been made through vast ages of the sparing mercy, forbearance, and goodness of God towards him? What is the nature of his present sufferings, and what are the motives which sustain his undying energy?

What is his ultimate destiny? Or again :—
What are demons or evil spirits? What is their origin, history, conditions of existence, or their powers and capacities for good and evil? How do they now stand related to Satan, to man, and to God? What powers have they? How could such personalities dwell in and speak through man? How are they employed? These and similar questions are left as yet in the region of the unknown. We may speculate about them, and form opinions about them, which possibly may be in harmony with fact; but God in his wisdom, as I have said, has seen meet to withhold from us any such information regarding them. He adjusts the light on this as on other subjects to our eye, to meet

the practical necessities of our journey ; to save us on the one hand from superstitious fear, and on the other from such ignorance as might produce self-sufficient carelessness. But surely all He has revealed is calculated to inspire us with a sense of the solemnity of life, to deepen our convictions of the dangers of temptation, and to make us cling with greater earnestness to Christ as our guide, our defence, and only sure refuge and deliverer from evil.

Let me here remark that we are apt to fall into two extremes regarding the power of Satan—by either exaggerating it, or making light of it. As to the first tendency : many seem to me to invest him with nothing short of the attributes of God, as if he were

omniscient and omnipotent; cognizant, like the Almighty, of the condition of every heart, "searching and trying the reins of the children of men," and at the same time suggesting every evil thought to every human being!

Now, whatever power Satan as a wicked spirit may possess, still let us never forget that his power is limited.

It is limited, in the first place, by the fact that he is a mere *creature*. As a creature, therefore, he can never possess any of the prerogatives of Deity. Whatever knowledge he may have, wherever his presence may be, in whatever way he may act, in these, and in all other respects, he is still a mere creature, limited in every faculty and in every power as truly as a child is.

Secondly, his power is limited by *the providence of God*. He is infinitely more under God's inspection and control—and no doubt under that of the holy angels also—than the villain who is thoroughly known to and constantly watched by the best and most powerful government on earth. The Lord knows when and how to keep back his wicked hand; to arrest his wicked actions; to frustrate all his wicked plans; to banish him into darkness, and to say to him, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." There are laws which govern moral as well as physical storms. He is an independent power, no doubt, in so far as any personal spirit is so, inasmuch as he has a will, and therefore can do that which is against the will of God, as every act of a

sinful will is. But he is not therefore an irresponsible power, nor can he ever change or defy God's eternal laws by which he is bound. Nor is he an uncontrollable power, but is under the government of Jesus Christ, to whom as Mediator all power is now given. Although he is essentially evil, the Lord will yet so control him, while permitting him to do his worst, as to make him the occasion of good. He can make the power of this enemy the occasion of training his own soldiers to endure hardness, and to become valiant in fight; and He can make the very darkness of his kingdom the occasion for displaying with more brightness the glory of his own kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy; and He can make the very selfishness of the evil

one the occasion of revealing his own glory of love and of self-sacrifice both in Himself and in the history of those who by grace share the same spirit. Whatever, therefore, the power of Satan may be, God's power alone is supreme; whatever his hatred may be to the cause of righteousness, God's love for it is infinitely greater; however subtle his wiles may be, God's wisdom is infinitely deeper. God and God alone, whose name is Love, is the one ground for the existence, the one security for the stability of the universe, the one hope for the triumph of right over wrong. Thus in everything and at all times, "greater is He that is for us than he that is against us." "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice!" "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble!"

|| Again, Satan's power is limited by *man's will*. This will he cannot force by the might of all the powers of darkness. He may tempt it, try to persuade it, bribe it, threaten it, lie to it, and exhaust every means to gain its consent, but so long as the "I will" or the "I will not" commands the fortress and refuses to yield to Satan, that fortress is impregnable! "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"—whoever thou art!

|| Finally, his power is limited by the fact of his *wickedness*. The eye of a spirit which loves not the spiritual becomes blind to its existence. The memory of a past holy affection cannot itself reproduce it: it becomes a fact remembered only as belonging to the past, but not therefore a possession for the

present. What we cease to love in spiritual things we cease to understand. Thus it is that unless a man is born again, and his spiritual eye is opened, "he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The evil eye, if I may so speak, sees only in the dark. There Satan is at home, and quite understands the forces which direct and the things which attract those who, like himself, "prefer darkness to light." But the kingdom of God, because of its brightness, blinds him, so that it is practically to him "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order,

and where the light is as darkness” His greatest puzzle, therefore, is a man who loves God. He cannot comprehend, or, as we say, *make out* such a consecrated soul, which sees and rejoices in the glory of God, and is subject to his holy laws, freely choosing to be governed by them, beholding God Himself in their moral beauty and righteousness. To such a mystery of iniquity as Satan, great indeed must be the “mystery of godliness,” especially when that is revealed in God manifest in the flesh! Thus is the wicked one limited in his power, because bound in chains of darkness, the moral chains of his own dark will and malignant passions—chains more heavy and binding than those which all the power of earth could forge from the iron of

the everlasting hills. It is thus, too, that even in this world the worst persons, though not yet devilish, may become so saturated with vice as almost to lose the capacity of believing in good, and are therefore always disposed to ridicule it as a pretence or hypocrisy, and the effect of mere circumstances.

Such persons attribute the difference between themselves and others to natural temperament, or education, or anything rather than an essential difference of character or a different deliberate choice of the will.

Of the reality of invincible principle in any one, and of the love of right as right, and of God as God, they are sceptical, and assume that every man has his price, by which he could be purchased, did they only know him

or it. Their judgment regarding good men is truly set forth in the picture of Satan in the Book of Job, where he is represented as having no faith in the existence of any genuine or unselfish love to God for his own sake, but only for what He gives. "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Hence it is, too, that no greater mistakes are made, no more unwise plans adopted, no greater folly perpetrated, than by a wicked spirit in the pursuit of evil or self-gratification in defiance of the claims of righteousness. For sin is confusion; it is a "false nature, and not in the harmony of things." Starting with false means for a false end, it mistakes the road; and after pursuing it

without a chart through mists of error, it ends where it began, in falsehood and a sense of bitter disappointment and failure. Whatever, therefore, the power of Satan is, we may be assured that there is no one more frequently perplexed, or no being who makes more gross mistakes. His most cunningly-devised schemes ever prove the very means of his being in the end baffled and overcome when met by the simplicity of truth and righteousness.

But if for these and other reasons we ought not to exaggerate the power of Satan, so let us beware of underrating it. We dare not treat the teaching of Christ and his Apostles as if they encouraged gross superstition and narrated childish dreams; for

assuredly to them the Church owes its belief regarding Satan. If this be indeed a fact resting on divine authority, and if he who tempted our Lord has now such power on earth as warrants his being called the "god of this world," and is still, in some way or other, man's "tempter," "adversary," and "accuser," "working in the children of disobedience;"—if it be a fact that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities and powers," surely then it becomes us to act in conformity with such a solemn revelation, and to "put on the whole armour of God," that we "may be able to stand in the evil day." If there be "wiles of the devil" with reference to ourselves, ought we to disbelieve them or to "resist" them? If there

be “snares,” ought we not to avoid them? If there be “devices,” dare we be “ignorant” of them? If he “goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,” does it become us to despise the warning, or “to be sober and vigilant?” It is not necessary for us, or the Lord would have given us the information, to know *when* Satan is present or *how*, or in what circumstances he may tempt us, or to attempt to distinguish between what may be suggested—although resisted—by the evil in ourselves, and what may come to us directly or indirectly from Satan or his angels, or his many agents seen and unseen. Enough to know, for all practical purposes, the facts revealed about him as our foe, and of our dangers from evil without as well as from

within, in order to induce us to avail ourselves of the only means of defence, deliverance, and final victory by holding fast our confidence in God and in the richness of his grace; by walking circumspectly, seeing the days are full of evil; by watching unto prayer; by being humble and meek; by abiding in Christ as our life, and following Him as our light; and by ever yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit of God, who alone is always with us and in us.

If instead of this we despise the teaching and warning of our Lord and his Apostles, and assume that we are better informed than they were regarding man's dangers and man's enemies, and that our religion is more spiritual, more rational, more "liberal," more in

accordance with the truth and reality of things, than theirs was, we may do so; but it is at our own peril. And our peril is not small if, by wilful ignorance or daring presumption, we become thus entangled in the very net which Satan has spread for us, and fall into the very pit which he has dug for us!

I conclude this paper in words, which I adopt as my own, spoken by one who will not be charged with an acceptance of mere traditional beliefs or of conventionalisms:—
“I cannot conceal my conviction, the result of my own experience, that your minds will be in a simpler, healthier state, that you will win a real victory over some of the most plausible conventionalisms of this age, that

you will grasp the truths you have more firmly, and be readier to receive any you have not yet apprehended, when you have courage to say, 'We do verily believe that we have a world, a flesh, and A DEVIL to fight with.'''*

* Maurice's "Theological Essays," p. 54.

II.

WHY OUR LORD WAS TEMPTED.

“ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”—MATT. iv, 1.

THE baptism of our Lord, and the temptation which immediately succeeded it, marked a new era in his life. Hitherto that life had indeed been a wonderful one, though not such as was likely to attract much notice from the world. Thirty years before, angels, with a great hallelujah chorus of “Glory to God!” had announced his birth to the shep-

herds as they watched their flocks at midnight on the silent hills; and the magi had come from the East, presenting to Him tribute as a King. Then followed the massacre of Bethlehem, the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, their return, and the quiet, unobtrusive life at Nazareth. Years pass, and nothing breaks in upon the ordinary upbringing of a Jewish child by pious parents, save the scene in the temple when He was twelve years of age, and when "all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers,"—but at nothing more. Nearly twenty years more pass, and the eye of man could discern in Christ only a carpenter's son, occupying a humble workman's place, labouring conscientiously at his daily employment,

attending the synagogue, and performing all his public and private duties as a true Israelite ; for “ He was made under the law,” and obeyed its precepts, moral and ceremonial. We need hardly remark, however, that this period was not lost to Himself or to the world. As a true man, He was acquiring experience of those conditions of the humanity in which He lived,—of the joys and sorrows, the struggles and trials, the lights and shadows, which make up the sum of its ordinary life. He was daily trained, by the habit of holy obedience, to do his Father’s will in everything, and in what are called small as well as in what are called great things. The tree in winter, when all is so dead and still in the frosty calm, when not

a leaf hangs from a branch, and no sign of life is apparent in a single twig, is yet quietly laying up a strength which will enable it to brave many a storm, and bring forth its blossom and fruit in due time. And so it was with the man Christ Jesus, whose spirit was silently built up and perfected in Nazareth by all the manifold appliances, from within and from without, of God's wise and loving education. Sweet thoughts refreshed his heart like dew; touches of sunlight quickened his spiritual life; sombre shadows of thoughtful sorrow brooded over Him from all He saw and knew; storms and tempests, too, such as ever sweep across life's desert, shook his being, but did not move it from the rock of ages. In one word, this soul,

originally holy, harmless, and undefiled, was made loftier, deeper, wider, grander, by the experience which He gained every day as a man; so that this uneventful period stands intimately connected with the solemn moment in his history when He is led by the Spirit to be tempted. For now He must pass from being known only as the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, the citizen of Nazareth, the pious Israelite, to his work as the great Messiah.

The fulness of time thus came when the Spirit led him from Nazareth to the Jordan to be baptized. John was then the great preacher in Judea, and was acknowledged as a prophet. Men of every rank attended his ministry. Even Herod feared him, and was

influenced by him. Multitudes followed him. But the Baptist, with the truth, humility, and self-sacrifice of a genuine messenger sent from God, joyfully confessed that he himself was not *the* light, and that he only directed men's eyes to it; that he was not the Christ, but only one who prepared the way for Him. He proclaimed the divine dignity of Jesus; acknowledged that he was unworthy as a servant to loose the very lachets of his shoes. With noble self-denying love he rejoiced in confessing that "He must increase, and I must decrease." He pointed Jesus out as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be

baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness: then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straight way out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. *Then* was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”

Admitting that we are ignorant of many of the reasons for the occurrence of such a great event in God's kingdom as the temptation of our Lord, yet there are several circum-

stances which in themselves throw much light upon this remarkable event.

Let us consider some of these.

It surely need not surprise us that Jesus, as a responsible being, should be subjected to temptation. The wonder would have been his exemption from this kind of trial. No member of the human race has been so exempted, from Adam, made pure and holy, after God's image, down through all his descendants. The angels have been, and possibly still are, tempted—how it is unnecessary at present to speculate—and some of them have yielded to temptation, for they “kept not their first estate.”

And if all created and responsible beings have, as far as we know, been thus tried,

from Gabriel, it may be, before the throne to Lazarus before the rich man's door; and if there is not one soldier in the army of the Lord of Hosts whose courage, steadfastness, and endurance have not been thus proved; and if there is not one bright and radiant spirit rejoicing before God who has not evidenced in such a way as puts it beyond a doubt that he *prefers* God to all other persons and things; does it seem strange that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, should have been subjected also to a trial which would prove his obedience, and be the occasion of giving glory to God?

Before further considering the special reasons why He of all men should be subjected

to temptation, one or two preliminary points demand our notice.

u The first is, that Jesus was *led by the Spirit* to be tempted, and did not Himself enter into temptation. Now this was characteristic of his whole life, and an instance of the principle by which He was always guided, and from which He never swerved. It is expressed in the words, "I come to do Thy will, O God!" The one desire, we might venture to call it the passionate desire of his spirit, was, "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee!" But with the confidence and obedience of a Son He ever left it to the Holy Spirit of wisdom—of whom Jesus said, "He will glorify me"—to determine and arrange the outward circumstances or forms

in which He the Son should glorify the Father and do his will. His race of obedience Jesus would always run, but He left it to God to choose the course, so to speak, whether long or short, rough or smooth, along steep and dizzy heights, or through roaring floods. And now it pleased the Spirit to lead the Son into the wilderness, there to be tempted of the devil, and there to glorify the Father ; and the Son meekly followed.

Again, He was led *into the wilderness*. What wilderness we are not informed. Probably it was the desert of Judea. This is a most dreary and desolate region. I have trod the awful solitudes of the ice world in the recesses of the higher Alps, have seen the waste of the desert sand, have traversed

apparently boundless and empty plains, and have experienced the loneliness of the dark Highland moors and inland lakes, abandoned to the spirit of solitude, with no blade of grass, nor song of bird, nor hum of bee to give life to their rocky shores and overhanging precipices; but never have I seen any spot on earth which so impressed my imagination with all that was wild, desolate, and weird as the desert gorges and broken uplands which connect the Dead Sea with Jerusalem. It looked to me verily as

“ A waste land where no one comes,
Or had come since the making of the world.”

To this wilderness Jesus was led to be tempted of the devil; and He was there “with the wild beasts,” and fasted for forty days.

Once more, he was led to be tempted *immediately after his baptism*, so that these two events are connected not merely in the order of time, but also in the order of God's wise and holy providence. At his baptism God's Spirit was given Him without measure, and He was endowed with all the gifts necessary for the accomplishing of his mighty work. It is to begin this great mediatorial work He is led by the Spirit of wisdom into the wilderness. A voice from God the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and now as a Son He is to glorify his Father. The Baptist, moreover, had declared Him to be the Lamb of God which was to take away the sins of the world; and now He is led to suffer in soul, spirit, and body.

We are now better prepared to consider more in detail the reasons why our Lord was led to be tempted.

11 1. He was tempted in order that *the reality and glory of his Sonship* might be made manifest. His Sonship is the chief corner stone on which the whole temple is reared. Those who are called to build upon it the house in which they hope to dwell for ever, must needs know how strong it is, and how able to bear the superstructure on which the Church perils its eternal existence! Its strength and endurance will therefore be evidenced by trial. Here is the Saviour who has come to glorify the righteous law of love and holy obedience towards God, witnessing in his own life to the reality of faith in God, as being trust-

worthy in all circumstances, even the most trying possible. Here is one man, at least, who comes to show what true loyalty to the King, and what true filial affection to the Father are—one man who is to shine forth amidst universal darkness as the true light of life! From eternity that Divine Son had ever been the object of his Father's love, a love which he returned with heart, soul, and strength. He had, moreover, "created all things," and therefore had created man after his own image, in order that man should share his own character and blessedness, by being, like Himself, a true son to the Father. But man fell by seeking to become a God to himself. Now the Divine Son becomes manifest in humanity. "God

sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ;” and in the flesh He will reveal what true Sonship is, what it is to love, and obey, and rejoice in the Father. He will reveal in humanity what humanity was created for, and what it is capable of becoming so as to fulfil its chief end—that of glorifying God and enjoying Him for ever. And the reality of this Sonship—the beauty and excellency of that with which God was well pleased, and which alone, in the nature of things, can please Him as the Father—all this will be proved and made manifest by trial. Evil in its most powerful and subtle forms will be permitted to assail Him in circumstances the most trying, that so it may be made manifest to all intelligent beings how

He was tempted like any of his brethren, yet "without sin." No one will be able to say of Him that He was like an exotic, so protected from every chilling blast that He could not but become fair and beautiful, yet that He lacked the strength and capacity to endure the ungenial climate, the unkindly soil, and the adverse circumstances of this rough and stormy world. The tender plant was carried to the wilderness, and subjected to such a trial as would destroy any life but that divine life which it possessed. This the temptation manifested and developed and strengthened until it became a plant of renown whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." But should we have ever heard of it, unless Job had

been tried, and his patience proved, and his faith in God thus made manifest ?

2. Jesus was led to be tempted that as the second Adam he might *redeem man* from the evil to which he was subjected by the fall of the first Adam. That we have "all sinned and come short of the glory of God," and that our nature has imbibed a deadly poison, and is prone to evil, are facts to which conscience and history alike testify. How deep and deadly our disease is, how like a foul leprosy it has touched our whole being, we never can fully understand here. We are too sinful to know how sinful we are. Revelation not only confirms the truth that this evil is in us, it also gives us the history of its origin in the overthrow of our first parents

by the devil. But how is the evil to be cured? How are we to be delivered from guilt and sin and rescued from the power of the evil one? By Jesus Christ only, who has come as the second Head of our race! He was a true man, his nature being essentially the same as ours, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, *born* a brother, yet—blessed be God!—"without sin." He came in "the *likeness* of sinful flesh;" but his flesh was not sinful. It was "a holy thing," because "conceived of the Holy Ghost," as well as "born of a woman." This Jesus will prove that sin is an alien thing to human nature as created by God—that it originated in a power without—that "an enemy had done this." As man He will meet Satan, and as man over-

come him, and glorify God in that same nature which had dishonoured Him, and thus atone for the evil done, by presenting to God, as the head of the race, the living sacrifice, well-pleasing unto Him, of a perfect Son, and therefore a perfect Brother. By so doing Jesus will also obtain power by which He can deliver from the enemy every man who will trust Him, and will accept of his life, and be like-minded with Himself, and will make him more than conqueror—and that too by the same simple but omnipotent weapons of faith and love by which He Himself overcame the wicked one. But *can* this Jesus overcome Satan? This will be seen! A battle will be fought, not with carnal weapons but spiritual, not between omnipotent force and creature

force, but between right and wrong, between the creature choosing God and obeying God and the creature opposing God and choosing self, between the head and representative of good everywhere and the head and representative of evil everywhere; and if the Righteous Head gain the victory through the might of divine principle, He will be able to say to us, "Greater is he that is for you than all who are against you." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "The prince of this world hath been cast out."

3. Jesus was tempted that, as our Deliverer, He might become *experimentally acquainted with the evil of sin*, with the character and power of the tempter, and with all our spiritual trials. When we remember that

Satan is man's greatest, most constant, most subtle, and most dangerous enemy, surely we see it to have been a most wise thing, as it was a most merciful one for us, that Jesus, our brother man, like a second David, should encounter this enemy, and submit to be tried by all his most cunning wiles; that He should learn from his own experience all his most masterly plans of battle, and measure the strength and sharpness of his most powerful weapons; that during forty days his very soul should descend, as it were, into hell, so that, "He Himself having suffered being thus tempted" to the uttermost limits of the possible, He might acquire such a knowledge of evil as would enable Him the better "to succour those who are tempted." We are now

assured, for our strength and comfort, that “we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” and knows, therefore, our need, and how best to supply it.

✓ 4. The temptation of our Lord was a *chief element in his sufferings* for us as our Mediator.

I do not say that the Spirit of God led Him to be tempted in order that He should suffer merely for the sake of suffering; for God cannot possibly love suffering as such. He can love it only as a condition for obtaining, or as the necessary result of manifesting, that moral good and glory which alone He loves. Suffering, however great, when resulting from acts of wilful and persistent wickedness, we

may pity, but cannot admire. We attach no value, for their own sakes, to the mere suffering unto death which even the patriot or martyr may endure in the defence of his country or of truth, but only as these afford the most powerful and touching evidence of the self-sacrifice and nobility of character which endured all in order to attain such grand and worthy ends. It is thus we watch with breathless admiration the brave man who plunges into the fire and smoke of battle, not because of the wounds which he may receive, or the risk of death which he runs, but because of the love of duty which inspires him in spite of suffering. Viewed in this light the sufferings of Jesus were most precious in the eyes of God. Every drop of

his blood was as it were the brightest gem which earth contained, and every groan which rent his heart was the grandest music ever heard by the angels in heaven, for these revealed what He Himself was. It thus "*became* Him, of whom and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." He came to taste death for every man ; and can we conceive any taste of death, except his last cup on the cross, more awful and terrible to his soul than this of which He partook when in contact with the liar and murderer, the enemy of all righteousness, for forty days in the wilderness ! Let it be remembered, too, that Jesus, from the perfection of his character, had a perfect knowledge of evil. The darkness of sin cannot compre-

hend the light of holiness, although the light of holiness pierces and reveals the darkness of sin. Hate and falsehood are blind to the nature and excellence of love and truth, although love and truth perceive the nature and vileness of hate and falsehood. Thus Jesus could not but see, with his pure spiritual eye, the awful vision of sin, take in all its magnitude, measure its lowest depths as revealed in temptation, and suffer from it accordingly. And if we dare hazard anything like conjecture on so awful a subject, might not the mere spectacle of the wicked one adding to his long career of persistent crime, begun on earth by the destruction of the first Adam, and continued with all the fierceness of a roaring lion until this last hour of his life,

when he reaches almost the utmost limits of hate in his determination to destroy for ever the kingdom of God on earth—might not the horror of such a spectacle have been the more terrible to our Lord when it was mingled with the knowledge of a time when this being was created bright and holy, and rejoiced in the light and love of a Father's home? To a human heart the sight of a lost prodigal is sad; but oh what is the bitterness and agony if in that face, stamped with the curse of every vice and passion, we trace the lineaments of a long-lost brother!

When we consider these moral results to be gained by the temptation of Jesus, apart from others which might be suggested, we surely

The parallel to Job

see sufficient reason why the wise and holy Spirit of God should have led Him to the wilderness.

In all this transaction, moreover, we have an illustration of that great mystery of evil, which, without its ceasing to be evil, is yet compelled to glorify God. Even sin will not be permitted to run waste in the universe. Hateful and detestable though it be, God will make it subserve the cause of righteousness, and the wrath of Satan, as well as of man, will be made to praise Him. Satan of his own free will shall be permitted to tempt Job, or to tempt Jesus; but out of all the consequences of his malice and hatred, good will come by the overruling providence and grace of God. And this is true of the temptation of



the whole race ; for though a blot and a curse, it nevertheless has been made the occasion of giving to redeemed men such a knowledge and education as shall make them, probably, the most wonderful beings in the whole universe in the range of their moral experience and the grandeur of their character. Like old and tried soldiers who have survived a long and terrible war, in which many cowards have deserted and fled, the veterans of the Church of Christ, who have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who have been more than conquerors through Him who loved them, will, perhaps, be the noblest specimens of courage and of discipline amidst

the armies of the living God and the hosts of heaven.

One other question here presents itself for solution. Why, it has been asked, was our Lord led into temptation, when from his very nature it was impossible for Him to fall?

Now much of this apparent difficulty turns upon the ambiguity of the words—Jesus *could not* sin. We may affirm, for instance, of a man whose tongue is paralysed, that he cannot lie by speaking lying words, because that is physically impossible; we may affirm the same thing of a noble and truthful character—like Paul or John—because it is morally impossible. On the other hand, we may assert that it is possible for the best man

on earth to lie, or steal, or murder, because it is not absolutely impossible for him to do so. Now, in one sense it was impossible for Jesus to sin—not physically impossible, for He had powers to act as He chose, but because from his nature it was morally impossible for Him to choose anything but what was right. He *could* not because He *would* not. The possibility of his sinning, *if He chose* to do so, the absence of any power from without compelling his will to choose the right, is as certain as that He was a real person. To deny this is to lose sight altogether of the reality of his humanity, absolutely to hinder us from receiving any good from his life, and practically to deny that He was tempted in all points like as we are. No doubt the actual

result, viz., that of Christ resisting the tempter, was as morally certain as though He had no power to sin. But a moral result is a very different thing in kind from a physical result. We attach praise or blame to the one, but none to the other. I do not praise an animal for following its instincts, or a machine for accomplishing its work, or the stars for moving in their courses; because I do not recognise a will and consequent responsibility in animal or mechanical forces. For the same reason I do not attach moral value to the outward acts of the pickpocket or housebreaker when in prison. But when I praise and admire what is right in a creature, I thereby recognise a will which might have acted otherwise, but could not from its love of right.

Accordingly, my admiration of a moral being increases with his absolute freedom from sin. The more I perceive how *impossible* it is for him to lie, how alien his whole soul is from all sympathy with the mean, the vile, the unjust, the selfish, the more I admire him. And hence we often express our high estimate of a person by saying that we believe he *could* not do an unkind thing or a selfish thing, just as we express our estimate of a bad person by saying that he *could* not speak the truth, or act with straightforward honesty. In both cases we recognise the power by which they are respectively controlled to be from within — in their wills. And thus it was with Jesus. As a man, and because He was as man necessarily fallible, He could have lost his

faith in God, and ceased to obey. But, on the other hand, as a holy man, with no sin or sinfulness in his nature, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," He so loved God and trusted Him, had such a real heartfelt delight in Him, that it was impossible for Him to sin. Yet this impossibility no more made the temptations less real than a bribe suited to all the desires of human nature would make the temptation to betray his country less real to the true and loyal man, whom it would nevertheless no more move from duty than it could prevent the earth from moving in order and beauty round the sun. The first Adam was without sin, and perfectly pure and holy, yet he was tempted and fell. In one word, in the reality of

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Christ's humanity, and not, as some have dared to assert, in the reality of his having "a body of *fallen* humanity," lay the possibility of his being open to temptation. And that humanity was as real as his Divinity. He took upon Him the nature of the seed of Abraham. Every feeling and affection, every passion and desire belonged to Him as man, but were regulated according to the proportion and order of God's beautiful kingdom. Every nerve which vibrates in the human frame, every hidden power which thrills the heart, and fills the eye, which gnaws with hunger, and tortures with thirst, were in his body as in ours. Fatigue could weary his limbs, and close his eyelids, and render the weight of the cross unbearable. Dwelling in

a wilderness, the fainting, the watching, and the wild beasts, were as real to Him as to us ; and infinitely more real to Him than they could have been to us, because of his holiness, were the sins which He beheld, the horror of the temptations which He listened to, and the spiritual agony which He endured during those days of trial from the worst being in the universe of God ! .

III.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”—MATT. iv. 1-5.

OUR Lord began his great work as the Messiah by a fast of forty days. Moses as representing the Law, and the great prophet Elijah, had each inaugurated a crisis in the history of the kingdom of God by fasting for a like period. And we cannot forget how these three sufferers and conquerors appeared together in glory on the mount of transfigura-

tion, when God, as our Lord was about to enter on the last great trial and manifestation of his Sonship, revealed in his baptism by blood on the cross, again testified, "This is my beloved Son."

We are too ignorant of the power of man's spirit to subdue or triumph over the body, to affirm that such fasts were necessarily miraculous.* But these were certainly connected spiritually with seasons of great trial, as preparatory to the discharge of those duties requiring the greatest courage and

* As to the number forty, which so often occurs in the Old Testament in connection with remarkable events, such as the forty days during which Moses and Elijah fasted ; the forty years in the wilderness ; the forty days during which Moses interceded, &c., Archbishop Trench notices that "everywhere it is the number or signature of penalty, affliction, confession, or the punishment of sin."

endurance, the strongest faith in God, and the most complete resignation to his will. And in every age of the Church the holiest men have in their experience found how bodily fasting in secret before God, as a remembrancer of sin, and in connection specially with its confession in prayer, has been found most helpful in bracing the soul for beginning any great work requiring faith and patience.

St. Mark seems to state that our Lord was tempted in some form or other, during the whole of those forty days. But whether He was or not, the three temptations of which we have an account appear to have taken place immediately after, or towards the end of his fast, when the ecstasy of high and

holy communion was over, which, while it lasted, might without irreverence be described as

“ That blessed mood

In which the affections gently lead us on—
Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.”

Then it was that Satan came to Him. He knew that Jesus was the Son of God; but what did this imply? He might still question whether sin was so absolutely alien to the nature of Jesus as to make temptation necessarily a failure. He knew from experience that personalities created pure and holy enough to be termed “sons of God” had sinned and fallen. He himself was one of

these, yet he “abode not in the truth.” The first man, Adam, was called “son of God ;” yet he too had sinned, and all his descendants, without one exception. Arguing from such an awful experience as this, and knowing certainly that Jesus was a real man, and in all things made like his brethren, nay, that his very fasting, hunger, weariness, and prayers, testified to the reality of his *humanity*—there was surely in this undoubted fact alone a sufficient ground to induce the wicked one to tempt our Lord to evil, in the hope that He would form no exception to the universal apostasy of his race.

We should also keep in mind that the invariable object of all Satan’s temptations, whatever be their variable form, is to destroy

true religion in the soul, by destroying that which is its sum and substance, or its very essence—*love to God*, implying a true spiritual knowledge of his character; a filial confidence in the righteousness of all the arrangements of his providence; an unswerving faith in the truth of all his promises; and a deliberate choosing of his will as being always righteous. So long as such love to God exists all is well, because all is right in the soul; but once that love is lost, all is lost. The desire to shake, therefore, the perfect confidence of Jesus as a Son, in God as his Father, prompted and guided every subtle attack of the Evil One.

Satan came to Him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread."

Now this "if" has special reference to the declaration made at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son." He who is a liar from the beginning insinuates that this voice spoke not the truth. *If*—why if? Had not God said it? But Satan professes to doubt the fact, in order to tempt Christ to disbelieve it. His object is to *shake Christ's confidence in the fatherly character of God*; and he makes *the circumstances* in which Christ is placed the occasion for darkening his soul with a doubt, which, if entertained, would soon involve Him in murky gloom. "A Son!" as if he had said, "a Son of God! and here in this wilderness, without even a friend, and fainting with hunger! It cannot be—no such Father would thus treat a child." And then the wicked

one, having cast this seed of doubt into the heart, at once suggests, as a legitimate exercise of the power which He must possess, and be doubtless free to use as the Son of God, that He should submit no longer to his Father, but *command* the stones to be made bread. The Tempter, as it were, said, "Come, thou hast power; use it according to thine own will. Submit no longer to the cruel providence of God. Command bread. It is right and reasonable that it should be so. Wait no longer on thy Father, who cannot or will not help thee!" We see then, that the first temptation was intended to shake the faith of our Lord in the love of his Father, because of *the outward trying circumstances* in which He was placed. . . .

It was thus in Eden the tempter endeavoured, alas too successfully! to shake the faith of our first parents by an argument derived from the alleged restrictions of God's providence upon their enjoyments. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of *all* the trees of the garden?" With what cunning is the doubt insinuated! What God had so liberally given is not mentioned. A veil is drawn over all his rich and exuberant bounties; and the tempter selects the one solitary restriction as the true exponent of God's feelings towards man. "What! has He actually denied you *this* tree? Has He said thou shalt *not*? If so, is this kind? Is it generous? Is it like a Father? Trust Him not then! but trust me. I am thy true friend. Eat, therefore, I say, of the tree, and live."

This, too, was the first temptation addressed to "the Church in the wilderness." "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Need I farther point out how this temptation has been repeated from generation to generation? It is perhaps the most common, the universal form of attack with which the enemy has assailed the soul of man, this of making him lose confidence in the father-

hood of God, because of the wilderness, the hunger, and the physical sufferings into which God has brought him in his providence; and to make him rebel against the "thou shalt not" with reference to the restrictions He lays upon many things we might naturally desire. Such a temptation more than any other perhaps appeals to man in his lower nature in the form of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes," and to his necessities and wants as a creature. In suffering especially, it opens a wide door for doubt and suspicion to enter regarding the good-will and love of God, whose power to supply these wants is unquestionable.

We have in Scripture many illustrations of this form of temptation. The case of Job is

one. Satan's assumption regarding Job was, that he served God only for what God gave him—that he had no love to God himself or confidence in Him as his Father—that, as a servant, he loved only his wages, and, as a man, only the portion of goods assigned to him. “Take these gifts away,” alleged the accuser, “lead him into a wilderness, leave him alone and solitary there, and he will curse thee to thy face!” We know the glorious result!—how, when everything which he possessed as a creature—money, family, health—were removed, his faith in God triumphed over all, enabling him to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah told the remnant of the people to remain in the land under God's protection; but they preferred going to Egypt. As he had anticipated, they there gave themselves up to heathen lusts and idolatries. The prophet addressed to them a letter of solemn admonition and warning. Their reply is recorded: "Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth

forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: *for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.* But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, *we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.*" (Jer. xliv. 15—18.) We see how they fell into the snare of this temptation, and forsook God, because while doing his will they had suffered from physical calamities; and how, like their fathers, they preferred Egypt and sin, with its flesh pots and plenty

of victuals, to the service of God, when it involved trial.

But why multiply illustrations of this form of temptation? What has been the history of the Church of Christ but a history of those who have been, like their Lord, in the wilderness, subjected to every kind of physical trial, from hunger and thirst, and from men more cruel than wild beasts? "They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, and were slain with the sword, and wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Yet all held fast their confidence in God. And was not St. Paul a truly noble specimen of a man,

in the midst of "perils in the wilderness," with no certain dwelling-place, in fastings oft, in nakedness and cold, and fighting with wild beasts? But in the spirit of his Master, he held fast his confidence in his Father, casting all his care on Him, as one who cared for him. O let us not be ignorant of the devices of the enemy!—for now, as ever, he assails Christians with this fiery dart. He assails them when, in the providence of God, they are made to suffer from bodily want; from the pains of hunger and nakedness; from struggles with temporal difficulties; from seeing those dearer to them than life share such sufferings; from captivity day and night, through long, long years; from exile among strangers; from grievous bodily

pain, incurable by human skill ; from the loss of all that was most attractive and beautiful on earth ; or from being held back as by chains of iron from attaining some very dear object. He assails them, too, in times of darkness and depression, when the soul cries out from the depths, as David did when he said, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape : incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort : thou hast given commandment to save me ; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man." These are some

of the wildernesses into which many children of God are led. And this is the temptation which the old serpent hisses into their ears, “*If thou be the son of God;*” “*If God be thy Father—how is it thus?*” O dread *if!* “If He were thy Father He could by a single word bring relief, and dispel the cloud, and bestow the blessing. But He does not. *Is He thy Father, then? Does He love thee? and canst thou love Him and trust Him? Thou dost well to be angry! If, then, He does not give as thou willest, get thou as thou canst!*” Blessed be God that his Son, in whom He was well pleased, suffered hunger, and loneliness, and deepest anguish in the wilderness! He who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. He took upon Him the form of a ser-

vant, and endured the cross, and despised the shame; and having been tempted, He is able to deliver those who are tempted. He has exposed the enemy's attacks by receiving them, and shown us the weapons by which we are to overcome. What said the Lord? "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Let us consider this reply, and learn how fitted it is to meet and to overcome the suggestions of the evil one.

We observe that our Lord here speaks as the Son of man, not as the divine eternal Son of God. He speaks as a member of the human family—as a brother for his brethren. The sword He uses in the combat is not one

suiting merely for a giant's hand, or to be wielded only by supernatural power, but it is such as may be used by a child, nay, it can be used only by one who has the child's spirit of true sonship. And hence we see indicated in our Lord's reply a principle which, if acted upon by us, will prove a sufficient defence against the wiles of the adversary.

The tempter professed—as he always does to the tempted—to have our Lord's interest at heart. Evil does not seek admission into the heart as evil, but as good; not as an adverse but as a friendly power. Satan can thus transform himself into an angel of light, and would have himself recognised as one who sympathised with Christ's sufferings—and who, pitying this Son so ill-used by his

Father, desired to give Him that life and happiness in outward things which were so cruelly denied him. As if he had said, "It could not surely be that one so great was to die, one who through the exercise of his own power could command the means of life! Must such life be maintained at all hazards? But what means of life were in this wilderness! Nothing but fasting and the pains of hunger! Ye shall not surely die; *command*, therefore, these stones to be made bread and *live*."

Of a truth life is the most precious possession. For life the living God hath created us, and to enjoy life is our blessed inheritance. But *what kind* of life? Is it a mere physical life? If so, it is true man lives by bread alone. As an animal with a bodily

frame, and craving appetites, and pressing wants, and sensitive nerves, man has indeed to do with the outward world, and with outward circumstances, and with all that can affect him through his physical frame. And our Father who hath so made us, and who knows that frame, provides for those wants in subordination to higher ones, and gives us all things richly to enjoy. But man is more than body. He is soul—he is spirit. He himself as a *person* is greater than all mere *things*. And therefore man, the immortal responsible being, man made after God's image—man the son of God, and heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Our Lord's reply, to see its force, requires a little further thought. "Every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is a Hebrew phrase to express "everything that God appoints" or "arranges," and is a portion also of the written "Word" of God. What a deep and significant truth is this! It is the full recognition of God's Fatherhood. It assumes that every appointment of God is wise and loving; and asserts accordingly that a man's life, that which is his genuine and abiding life and happiness, cannot consist in *opposing* such appointments of his Father, or in trying to get free from them as from chains and fetters; but must consist in a meek acquiescence in them, in meeting and sympathising with a Father's will as revealed in

them, and thus by the inner chemistry of love converting them into food wherewith to nourish the life of the spirit. Our Lord, therefore, as a man, takes his stand upon a principle so broad and comprehensive as to include every possible appointment of God—so that whatever the arrangements of his wise and fatherly government may be—however varied, however trying to flesh and blood, however mysterious and incomprehensible with reference to his universal plan, yet as that plan is perfect in every part, each person may rely with unbounded confidence on God, knowing that he shall, out of all, receive life more abundantly to his spirit, provided only he will first as a son seek true life in the love of God Himself. With such

life as this in God, the God of grace and of providence, the Governor of the world, the wise and loving Disposer of all things, no man can ever be in any wilderness where life cannot be found, for God Himself, our life, is there! The universe thus becomes an Eden to his child! God has so adjusted all circumstances with reference to him as a well-beloved son in Christ, that all things appointed *must* prove the means of perfecting his higher nature, enabling him to bring forth more fruit to his glory. For love to God in the soul, by its own divine chemistry, eliminates the means of nourishing its life out of all things; like a living plant which gathers strength and beauty from all its varied surroundings—from darkness and light, from storm and calm, from

cold and heat, from drought and moisture, from the solid earth, and from the viewless air. But the soul which loses its life becomes like a dead plant when the very same things which formerly worked together for its good, now work together to turn it into corruption!

This principle—so elevating and sublime, so heavenly, yet of such practical power for us while dealing with earthly things—is often depicted in Scripture; as when it is said, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;” “All things work together for good to them that love God;” “All things are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

And we find the same principle illustrated in history, and in the lives of good men.

Job learned the lesson of living by faith in God alone when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." David learned it when he said, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us! Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time their corn and their wine increased." The prophet Habakkuk learned it when he declared, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my

salvation." Hezekiah learned it when, after recovering from the sickness which brought him to the gates of death, he thus prayed to God, "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it. O Lord, *by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.*"

It was thus, too, that the songs of joy and praise to God, which have never been silent in Europe for eighteen centuries, began when Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight in the prison of Philippi, and all the prisoners heard them, and "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," who were once prisoners of sorrow and suffering, have since joined them. And many a John, banished in providence to his own lonely

Patmos, has shared the peace of the great exile in spite of outward circumstances, and felt that he was not alone, because the Father was with him, and that he had a companionship, and a bread to eat of the wilderness, that the world knew not of nor could understand; and a living water to drink of amidst the arid sands, and which was *in* him, springing up unto everlasting life.

And have not all who have thus trusted God found it to be true in their own experience, that in all his appointments they could find life! Whether He appointed them a palace or a hovel, health or sickness, riches or poverty, their living souls drew a better health from all the varied outward vicissi-

tudes of time ; they possessed a life which was hid from the world with Christ in God. Oh ! how many holy and happy ones have thus learned of Christ :—the meek one dying from slow decline ; the agonized one suffering from excruciating pain ; the father or mother bravely fighting life's battle in the cold and bleak day ; the bereaved orphans or widows, without relations, money, or health ; this one with honourable ambition never to be realised ; that other with the object of a deep attachment, part of their very being, buried in the grave, or in some way gone, to them at least, for ever ; each and all suffering, and walking in a darkness which no light from earth could pierce—nothing left, as it were, but God ! But God ? What was

this portion which was left? Was it not *all* that could fill and satisfy the soul? And so accordingly they found that He alone was more than all persons and all things; and that to know Him was life eternal; and that verily man, as a Son, a beloved Son, did not live by bread alone, but by all that his Father appointed!

But what of the discontented and peevish, the complainers against God and man, who are kept quiet, only as mere animals are, by being fed; whose whole life is in outward things,—health, wealth, amusement, business, pleasure, society, and the like,—who seem to deny the very possibility of any one possessing peace in God without these;—who justify impatience, discontent, despondency, wicked-

ness, or despair, if their wants are not supplied, or their desires gratified? What do all such confess but that they believe with Satan that man lives by bread alone, and alone by those appointments of God which are agreeable to flesh and blood? I will not speak of the loss which these may incur hereafter, but this loss at least they must incur of their names being blotted out from the roll of the noble army of martyrs gathered from all lands and from all ages! This is a glory they can never share. Let us beware then lest the adversary get by this temptation the advantage over us; for it has induced multitudes to ruin soul and body. It has led to many a suicide. How often has the old serpent suggested this short method of getting quit of the wilderness, and

the hunger, and the wild beasts, instead of the soul being braced into a meek and courageous, manly submission to God's will! And so the precious talent of life has been squandered—the grand opportunity of being good in trying circumstances lost—the last act being a testimony of cowardice and lost faith in God, and in the loving wisdom of his appointments. No doubt this terrible act is generally the effect of temporary insanity—an insanity that may be a mysterious infliction, through hereditary disease, for which the poor sufferer is in no way responsible, any more than for the delirium of fever. But may not the condition of mind which produces suicide be often traced to bad, or at least thoughtless, habits, to culpable ignorance

and want of thought, and to the neglect of religious principle cultivated during previous years? The consequence is that when the wilderness comes, and the hunger, and the distress, and perplexity, and the thousand things which give pain, no God is known, or loved, or trusted; and the mind wanting this one light wanders in darkness, and without this one hope falls into despair, and without this one strength perishes in weakness! We must not think of the end only, but also of those long-gathering and wilful causes which *may* have produced it. Oh! how many souls would be saved from that habitual state of spirit which ends at last in a diseased body, and a diseased mind, if they ceased from practical atheism; and cultivated a spirit of cheer-

ful, hopeful faith in God as their Father, and perilled their soul upon the blessed principle which the Man of Sorrows unfolded, and on which He acted:—"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," or by *all* God appoints!

And this want of faith in a living God has also tempted many to escape from poverty by dishonest means. They have not the moral courage to dare to be poor as Jesus Christ was, and they refuse to dwell in a wilderness even with God—but prefer a palace without Him, even if built up with the wages of dishonesty and sin. During a famine in Germany, some who insisted on obtaining bread by violence justified themselves, saying: "You know we

must live.” “I don’t know that,” said Luther bravely, “but I know we must be honest.”

How much wicked sentimentalism, too, has been uttered with reference to young women working for small wages, taking to evil ways for their support, as if their difficulties justified them in becoming slaves to the devil and his vilest agents in destroying themselves and others! Unless God provides them with food in the wilderness, they may forsooth cast off his authority and supply it in their own way or in Satan’s way! To speak thus is no mercy, and manifests no real sympathy. There is an immortal spirit in the heart which cannot be satisfied with mere husks. Help them we must as we best can, but tell them we must that the wages of sin is death.

But it is impossible to enumerate the many ways in which men try to turn stones into bread by seeking to bring good out of evil, true food to nourish their true life out of what cannot, in the nature of things, produce it. Sometimes this is attempted in a gross form, by dishonest practices, by false weights, by foul and false adulterations, which are as great an "abomination to the Lord," and in many cases far greater, than are false doctrines; for the latter may be the product of a weak mind, but the former must always come from a wicked heart. All those plans and policies, also, by which men seek to get supposed good to themselves by doing injustice and acting unfairly to others, and trampling them down, from avarice or proud ambition, may

be traced to the same devilish chemistry of seeking to convert stones into bread. And sharing the same mind and spirit essentially are all those who would seek in spiritual things to trick conscience, and to obtain the bread of a true and therefore eternal life (which can be found only by an intelligent abiding faith in Christ, "the true bread of life"), from the stones of forms, and ecclesiastical arrangements, and a faith, not in God, but in the miracle of the Sacrament, and in the magic powers of an assumed priesthood.

Good Lord! deliver us from the lie of expecting any good but in the knowledge and love of Thyself as revealed by Thyself, the Father of our spirit, through Thy Holy Spirit to our own spirit; that as Christ our Lord

lived by knowing and loving Thee the Father, his meat and drink being the doing of Thy will, so we may live by Him, feed on Him, eat his flesh, and drink his blood, by daily partaking of his character through faith in Him, and by daily yielding ourselves to do his righteous will !

Lastly, we should observe that Jesus, neither in the wilderness nor during his life, ever used his supernatural powers to supply any of his own wants or the wants of his Apostles. This grand principle holds true with reference to the exercise of the same powers by every servant of God who possessed these, in any age of the world and in any period of the history of the Church. Such powers were never used for mere per-

sonal or selfish purposes—never made the means of escape from sufferings or duties imposed by God, but were in every case used so as to advance, directly or indirectly, the kingdom of God. From a holy and loving God these powers came ; they revealed God ; in God's name they were used ; and to God they returned in the spiritual good which they occasioned. Jesus, in refusing to command the stones to be made bread, accepted and lived out this principle, that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

IV.

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. iv. 5—7.

THE scene of the second temptation was the pinnacle of the Temple ; probably the spot described by Josephus as being “one of the most memorable works ever seen, for whereas the valley was so deep and precipitous that one could not bear to look

down it, on the edge of this precipice Herod raised the immense height of a tower, so that if any one from the pinnacle of this roof should look down to both the depths at once, he would be seized with dizziness, the sight not being able to reach the bottom of the abyss." Making all allowance for the exaggeration of the writer, we yet know, from the late explorations at Jerusalem, that the Temple wall at the south-east corner, overlooking the Valley of Jehoshaphat, was itself of immense height, and that any tower erected on its summit would in some sense merit the above description. Thither Satan led Jesus to be again tempted.

Why this pinnacle or tower of the Temple was chosen by Satan for his renewed attack

upon our Lord we may possibly be able to discover as we proceed in our exposition. I would only here remark, that unless our Lord had been conducted to some height from which it was possible literally to cast himself down, the temptation would lose its significance. On the other hand, its subtle meaning becomes more apparent from the fact of a height within the Temple having been selected rather than a rock or precipice in the wilderness.

How our Lord journeyed thither we are not informed: probably as any ordinary person would have done. Nor do we know *when* the temptation took place — whether when the courts of the Temple were crowded with worshippers, or, what is more likely,

beneath the silent stars of night, seeing that the presence of man had nothing to do with the conflict in the Temple any more than in the wilderness. We may just add, that any alleged difficulty as to how Jesus obtained admission to such a place at all is very trifling, when the nature of the transaction and the persons engaged in it are recognised as realities.

The *ultimate* object of this second temptation, as of all the others, was to destroy, as we have already remarked, Christ's spirit of perfect Sonship, of perfect filial love, faith, and obedience towards his Father. This object was sought to be attained in the first temptation by representing the outward circumstances in which He was placed by God as

inconsistent with a Father's love; and such, therefore, as he ought not to submit to. The *immediate* object of the second temptation was to destroy *his faith in the reality of his Father's presence and love*, by inducing Him to "tempt the Lord his God," and therefore to demand a sign as the ground of faith.

Yet it seems that he had another object subordinate to this, which may be first noticed, and that was *the destruction of our Lord's bodily life*. It is evident that the work of redemption never could have been accomplished had our Lord been induced to destroy his own life. But that the devil should attempt to induce him to do this, or by any means to destroy it himself, is in perfect harmony with his character, he being not only "a liar," but

also "a murderer, from the beginning." It is in harmony also with his policy, which has been so consistent in every age of the world, to destroy the chief witnesses for God. Of "the destroyer" it may be truly said, "Which of the [prophets has he not slain?]" His wish to cause our Lord's death even at this early period of his history, by inducing Him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, was in harmony also with the cunning which concealed its design by professing anxiety for the preservation of Christ's life in the wilderness, and urging Him to command the stones to be made bread.

It is indeed a part of the mystery of iniquity that any such power as this "power

of death," however limited by the providence of God, should, in any sense, belong to the wicked one. But we must distinguish between constructive and destructive power; between, for example, the power of creating any great work of art and of destroying it; the power of preserving life and of taking it away; the power of forming character and of injuring it. The one has a purpose of good in it, and demands patience, self-sacrifice, and all that tends to ennoble its possessor; while the other demands only for its exercise the absence of all good and the possession of evil, and is strong in proportion as it is wicked. Thus the power of good men in proportion to their goodness is constructive, but the power of bad men in proportion

to their wickedness is destructive. The power of God is therefore wholly constructive in regard to the universe as a whole. Even when He destroys, it is in order to build up in some other form. On the other hand, the power of Satan is wholly destructive, and only by the higher power of God is it ever made an occasion of good. The kingdom of God is thus a kingdom of eternal progress ; a kingdom of light, ever shining more and more unto the perfect day ; a kingdom of life, ever growing, and renewing itself as life eternal ; a kingdom, too, where there is no waste, but where every fragment is gathered up and made to add to the ever-accumulating riches of the universe. But the kingdom of evil is without order, without progress, except from

death to death, without light, without life, where nothing is saved, but all is wasted and lost. That Satan, therefore, should have "the power of death" is in keeping with all we know of the kind of power which is possessed by the wicked alone.

But, while Satan desired, I believe, to destroy Christ's life, he may have had doubts as to how far he was able to accomplish his purpose. It is true that the previous history of Jesus had not revealed any power possessed by Him for the preservation of his own life different from that possessed by other men. In the wilderness it was evident that He had suffered like other men from fasting, and like other men was an hungered. On the other hand, merely to destroy Him, were that pos-

sible, would have been a very small victory in comparison with what was the one grand aim of Satan's wicked ambition—victory over his faith in God. Let that only be achieved, and the casting of Himself down would at once secure death to soul and body. To accomplish this he now concentrates all his energies and draws from all his resources.

Our Lord had expressed, in resisting the first temptation, his confidence in God's word, quoting from the Old Testament what expressed his own deepest convictions:—"It is ✓written," He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And He maintained accordingly his life of Sonship by abiding in the truth of God, meekly accepting

his fatherly and righteous will. Satan will now adroitly avail himself of the same weapon, and endeavour to wrest, so to speak, from the hands of Christ, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and turn it against Him. For Satan, too, is acquainted with Scripture, and is able to quote it with apparent aptness. If Jesus will reverence that "Word," he will also profess to do so. Its authority he will not question, but rather employ it as the very means of opening the heart of Jesus to unbelief. That we may perceive more clearly the cunning device of the adversary, let us read the whole psalm from which Satan selects but one portion :—

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the

Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust : his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night ; nor for the arrow that flieth by day ; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness ; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand ; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation ; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder : the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.” (Psalm xci.)

One cannot help being impressed with the

daring effrontery and profound cunning of Satan in quoting this psalm at such a time. If there is one passage in the Word of God which we might suppose he would avoid more than another at such a crisis, it is this; for the whole psalm is full of promises to him who has a childlike trust in God. It is not strictly speaking a Messianic psalm, or one prophetic of Christ, but yet it is specially applicable to Him as one who alone manifested in perfection that spirit of Sonship which is here described. For the man of faith in the psalm is one who dwells in holy confidence in the secret place of God's own presence and love, and thus abides under his protecting shadow. He only is entitled to sing a song of joy; for God is his refuge

and fortress, and will protect him from every danger. His truth will be his buckler to cast off the fiery darts of the wicked one. Night and day he is safe; and because he makes the Lord his refuge and habitation, no evil will come nigh him. And it is added, "For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." And such a one is loved by God, and knows God's Name, which is Love. He shall tread upon the lion, and trample the dragon or serpent under his feet. He shall be exalted and set on high, his prayer shall be answered, God will be with him, deliver him in trouble, satisfy him with long life, and he shall see his salvation.

It does seem strange indeed that Satan should have entered into this holy ground to fight for unbelief; that he should have touched such a chord and awakened the memory of such a song as this. While he had no spiritual light, and no eye to perceive its spiritual meaning, yet I doubt not the psalm in its letter was one which was familiar to him as a war song of faith in the armies of the living God; and he must have often heard its triumphant notes in times of spiritual combat, when the heart of the good soldier became stronger in the faith breathed by this holy strain. And who knows but that during these forty days of trial he had heard it uttered from the parched lips of this Jesus of Nazareth, whose life was an embodi-

ment of its truth? But understanding it even as a wicked mind could alone do, was there no cunning in an attempt to turn this strong position by a bold venture, by converting, if possible, those very promises of protection from danger, made to all who trust God, into subtle arguments for tempting our Lord to do the very reverse, and that, too, under the appearance of an act of faith?

It seems to me, also, that the letter of this psalm, the peculiarity of the phraseology in which trust in God is expressed, suggested to Satan the cunning idea of leading Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple rather than to a rock in the wilderness. The psalm, viewed as Satan could alone view it in its letter and not in its spirit, seemed to have been almost

written for one who was specially placed within the sacred courts of the Temple. In a sense, that Temple was "the secret place of the Almighty"—the holy place hidden from human eyes, and the holiest of all, within the "Holy City," and where to the Jews God was peculiarly present. "They shall pollute *my secret place,*" says God, speaking of the Temple, "for the robbers shall enter into it and defile it." Here was the place in which He had "put his name." Here was the "holy hill of Zion," the very fortress of God. Here, if anywhere, were the sheltering and protecting wings, not of the cherubim, but of the Almighty Himself. On what spot of earth, then, according to this interpretation suggested by the letter of the psalm, could

any man who professed to trust God be more safe than here? Here, if anywhere, God will fulfil his promise of being his protector and deliverer, and give his angels charge over him, so that even if he were to cast himself down from the giddiest height he would be saved from dashing his foot against a stone. In such circumstances, so manifestly adapted to the nature of the temptation, Satan says, "Cast thyself down."

Satan would here represent Christ's casting Himself down under the promise of God's protection as a proof of the reality of that faith in God which He professed in the wilderness, and which acknowledged that man *lived* by every *word* proceeding from God's mouth, or "by all He appointed." Satan would also

make the insinuation—naturally so painful to a simple trusting heart—that Christ’s faith was not real—that while it may have stood the possible approach of death by famine, it could not stand the certainty of death on the supposition that God’s word was either untrue or that the Saviour did not believe it. Satan, as it were, thus addressed Him: “Thou hast declared thy faith in God, in his providence, and in his word. If thy faith be real, prove it! God has declared in his written word that He will protect to the utmost and deliver from death all who put their trust in Him; nay, that He will give his very angels charge over all such, lest in falling they should dash their feet against a stone. These promises are specially made to those who are placed

where thou art now within the consecrated precincts of his holy Temple, the secret place of the Most High. If thou trustest thy Father, then cast thyself down from this giddy height, and thus prove the reality of thy faith and of his truth." To this our Lord replied, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

In this reply Jesus exposed the true nature of the temptation. Let us see what it was. We shall get some light upon this point by referring to the second temptation in the wilderness as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus:—

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the

people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? *wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?* And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel."

Our Lord's reply is given in a quotation from Deut. vi. 16, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord thy God," and it is added there, "*as ye tempted him in Massah*"—thus referring to the above history, which became memorable

as the record of a special "day of temptation in the wilderness," and gave to the water the name of "the waters of temptation." Now if we examine in the light of this narrative the nature of the sin here called "tempting" or "proving" God, we have no difficulty in understanding it. It is evident that the children of Israel had lost faith in God; and they asked, accordingly, "*Is God among us or not?*" The demand for water was not merely to supply their physical wants, but as a "sign" by which to prove the presence of God, and so to justify faith in Him. They practically said, "We cannot trust God and his promises *now*, whatever He has been or done in the past; we have no evidence of his being with us, or of his

working in the present. We know not if He be among us or not. But if He *is* present with us, let Him prove it! And the proof we ask, the sign which alone will convince us, is this—let Him give water out of this desert!” They were worse even than wicked King Ahaz, who, when offered a sign, refused, saying, “I will not ask, neither *will I tempt the Lord.*” Such a trying or tempting of God on the part of Israel was thus the result of unbelief in his living presence. And this no sign could restore, for faith in a sign or wonder is not faith in God, nor can it of itself restore such faith in any one who has ceased to know and love. How can the signature to a promise renew a faith lost in the promiser? It is to this lost faith the

writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alludes when quoting from the Psalms, "Harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers *tempted me, proved me*, and saw my works forty years;" adding, as a warning against the same evil, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you *an evil heart of unbelief*, in departing from the living God."

Let me here notice that in tempting the children of Israel to this unbelief, Satan seemed to have purposed not only the destruction of their spiritual life, but, as in the corresponding case of our Lord, the destruction of their bodily life also. He may have found in his experience that his power of in-

flicting physical death was in some degree consequent on his triumph over spiritual life. Be that as it may, we are struck by the fact that it was immediately after this "day of temptation in the wilderness" that Amalek attacked Israel, and was overcome only through the faith of Moses, who, in the spirit of Christ, exercised filial confidence in God, so that making the Lord his refuge, he did not feel the arrow by day, and he and his people whom he represented were safe while thousands fell around them. Alas! how strange that, thirty-eight years afterwards, when the same sin was repeated, Moses, in anger at such rebellion, should have so far lost his meek confidence in God as to have spoken unadvisedly with his lips, and

to have called forth the solemn rebuke, "Because *ye believed me not* to sanctify me before the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. xx. 12). It was immediately after this that Moses, in consequence of his sin, had to ascend Mount Nebo to die!

When Jesus, therefore, replied to Satan, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," He laid bare the real nature of this renewed attack upon his faith as God's beloved Son, and exposed the evil of the enemy, tearing asunder all the false disguises by which he would conceal his real designs. He showed that what Satan proposed as the very evidence of faith would have evidenced unbelief.

For to cast himself down from the pinnacle without any command from God, any call of duty—but merely to afford proof, as it were, of his faith in God and in the truth of his promises—was virtually to “prove,” to “try” or to “tempt” the truthfulness and love of God himself, by demanding supernatural protection as a “sign.” True love does not thus test love, but rests and relies upon it with unhesitating faith. To demand proof of love is to doubt it, and to doubt love is to disbelieve it. And so our Lord, with the clear spiritual light of love, pierced the darkness of the evil one as He replied, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

And thus our Lord, truly dwelling in the secret presence of the Most High, yea, in

the very heart of God Himself, and *abiding* under his shadow, realised all the blessings promised to such true faith. He was delivered from the snare of the fowler. No evil befell Him. Ministering angels guarded Him. He verily trod upon the lion and the adder! Because He set his love on God, and had known his name, therefore God delivered Him, and set Him on high—from whence He could not be cast down! He called and was answered, and God was with Him in trouble, and delivered Him, and honoured Him, satisfied Him with long life—even with Himself as life eternal—and showed Him his salvation! Such were and ever will be the results of humble childlike faith in the ever-present and ever-loving God!

But let us for a moment look at this Satanic temptation as it is revealed in the history of the fall of man, for it seems to me that we can detect some traces of the same trail, however concealed, of the old serpent in Eden.

God had promised life to our first parents while abiding by faith in Himself; and this promise necessarily involved spiritual death as the consequence of disobedience. So long, therefore, as they abode in the righteous state towards God, for which they were created by the Eternal Son, so long did they possess a life which in its nature was a life eternal; but if they disobeyed they must surely die. The tree of life was, I believe, consecrated by God as an outward

sign to strengthen this faith in Himself; and not only did the food it yielded sustain life in the body, but, like a sacrament, it was the sign and pledge of the love of God, who sustained true life in the soul. The devil, however, made our first parents doubt the reality of God's word of promise of life, and of his consequent threatening, when he asked, "*Hath* God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" To this they replied, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Satan, the liar, contradicted that word, saying, "Ye shall *not* surely die," and suggested

the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was done for the very same reasons, as I apprehend them, which induced him to tempt our Lord and the children of Israel,—first to destroy the bodily life of Adam and Eve, as Satan no doubt hoped that the day they ate thereof they *would* surely die; and then to accomplish at the same time what was of more importance, the destruction of their spiritual life, by inducing them to test or deny the reality of God's truth, instead of resting on it by passive obedience; as if he had said, "God says you will die. Surely He never said that! It cannot be! God knows very well you will have a higher life. But if you have any doubt, test God's truth and eat of

the tree, and be convinced by experience." They ate thereof, and sin and death entered their souls. They would now willingly eat of the tree of life, in order to obtain life from the sign which they could get from the God of life alone. But no sign could give life, or restore lost faith, and so they were "driven" from it in judgment and in love, as from a sacrament of death, to find life by a new and living way.

This temptation is one which in various forms has been repeated by Satan ever since. The unbelieving Jews yielded to it in our Saviour's time. "The Pharisees came forth and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven—*tempting* Him." This craving for signs was a sorrow to our

Lord, for it evidenced want of faith in Himself:—"He sighed deeply in spirit and said, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you that no sign will be given to it." He complained of this, saying, "Unless ye see signs and miracles ye will not believe!" He rebuked them, saying, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and none will be given to it!" Nor did our Lord ever give any sign or wonder or work any miracle which itself could convince or convert those who had not "the *truth*" or truthfulness in them, a condition necessary for the miracle to operate as a means to believe in Himself as "*the truth*," and in His mission from His Father. He Himself was the light of life shining in the darkness, and

those who did not wish or choose to see the light could not have their eyes opened by any mere "sign" of its existence. And thus it was that on the morning of the day of his crucifixion He neither would work a miracle nor speak a word even, to convince or convert Herod, who longed to see Jesus, and who now met him for the first and last time. These would have been of no avail if a greater wonder failed to convince—the wonder of the silent and suffering Jesus. On the other hand, faith, where real, however weak, was often strengthened and rewarded by works of wonder which pictured vividly to the outer eye some of the inexhaustible spiritual riches of Him beheld with the inner eye of the spirit.

St. Paul also complains of the same craving after signs in his day. "The Jews," he says, "require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;" but the only sign and the only wisdom or philosophy he would give them was Christ and Him crucified, which would be a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, "but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks," was "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

It is unnecessary to do more than indicate the many ways in which men, even within the Christian Church, from the beginning until now, have manifested their unbelief in God, by craving after some visible or conscious sign or token of God's presence and

love, rather than by accepting God in the Spirit and through faith in his Son. This has been the source of that dark and confused world of dreams, of auguries, of magic, and of witchcraft; the “intruding into those things which they had not seen,” “departing from the faith, and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,” all of which have played so great a part in the darker periods of human history, and all having as their object more or less to obtain some sign from the unseen to assure the presence and secure the protection and favour of an almighty God. In the same spirit, the priesthood have put forth false claims to spiritual power, and have professed to work wonders in the physical and moral world—by Sacraments, and a

whole machinery of a human and so-called spiritual agency—to *secure* God for all who trust in *them*, or in what *they* alone minister—God Himself being lost or concealed in the crowd of signs which profess to reveal Him! Thus it has been from the miracles of the middle ages down to the convulsions and hysteria of the recurring seasons of religious excitement, all of which have been eagerly laid hold of and adduced as so many special signs from heaven of God being with this or that church or party, but not being nigh to all who call upon Him in sincerity and truth.

Very different has been the teaching of God Himself, as He is revealed in the spirits of men, in human history, and above all in

Jesus Christ his Son. He, the only living and true God, desires to be known, as not only the Maker of all, but the Father of all, the God of all flesh, the Father of our spirits, to whose love every heart should respond, whose glory every eye should behold, and whose voice every ear should hear. How intensely does the Psalmist realise this in the 139th Psalm — the grandest song ever written of the omnipresence of God our Father! He cannot find words to express his sense of God's nearness and *innerness*. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted

with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." Very wonderful, too, is the teaching of St. Paul, not to Jews or to Christians, or to the ignorant only, but to the educated yet pagan people of Athens. They had erected an altar to "the unknown God," whom "they ignorantly worshipped," but it is this God he would have them know, and that because He knew *them*, and was nearer their spirits than was the atmosphere to their bodies. This God, he said, the Maker of all men and nations, had arranged the bounds of their habitation, including all the circumstances of their earthly life within and without, for

the very purpose that they should seek Him if haply they might find Him, though He was not far from any one of them, "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Nay, heathen though they were, and ignorant of God though they were, He was still their Father, as certain also of their own poets had said, "For we are His offspring."

It was by this simple faith in the presence and love of His heavenly Father—revealed indeed by a voice from heaven, but which would have been meaningless unless God had been revealed in His own Spirit—that the beloved Son maintained His place in perfect peace and safety on the giddy pinnacle of the Temple.

We are all called, as the children of God,

Application

to exercise the same faith, and to possess the same peace. Now as ever we have to be warned, "lest there should be in us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," and to be exhorted to "hold fast our confidence in Christ," if we are to be "partakers with Him"—partakers of His life and joy. Now as ever we may be induced through unbelief to question God's presence and love, and to ask, "Is God among us or not?" and, instead of our opening the eye to receive the ever-shining light, and the ear to listen to the living word, and the heart to receive the unchanging and all-sufficient love, we may turn aside and become satisfied with "holy things" instead of a holy God.

We may read the Bible, but as the record

only of what God had once revealed to some men, not of God now revealing himself to us also through His Son and Spirit. The sacraments may be received, but yet without faith in the living God and in His gift to us of that life eternal which is in His Son. And thus steps intended to help us to higher things become the means of our slothfully resting on these steps, or, it may be, of our descending rather than of ascending by them. What was intended to reveal God, practically conceals Him. "Religion" may thus exist without godliness, that is, without God. Oh! how long shall it be ere we know Him! How long ere we become little children, and lay ourselves in the arms of Christ, assured that in Him we have the true possession of all per-

sons and things, of all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption !

Let us glorify God, then, as dear children, —not by tempting Him, or asking “signs,” or questioning the reality of His presence with us,—but by believing in Him, resting on Him, enjoying Him, and acting in the spirit of His beloved Son, our Saviour and Brother! Lord, keep us simple, and humble, and believing! and keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins! When we stand high, may we stand more by childlike faith in Thee; and may we trust when we cannot trace, and abide in Thy love!

V.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

“ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth 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. iv. 8—10.

TO meet his last temptation Jesus was led up to a high mountain ; but “ whether in the body or out of the body ” it is difficult to determine. While the spiritual meaning of these temptations, and not the mode or circumstances in which they occurred, con-

stitutes their value to us, yet I see no adequate reason for rejecting the impression which the narrative naturally conveys, that they were historically true in their outward details as well as in their inner spirit. It is assumed by many able critics that this one must necessarily have taken place in a vision, however objective and real the tempter and his temptation were. Yet there is a presumption against this from the fact, that it would form an exception to every other event in Christ's life as recorded in the Gospels. In the history of God's supernatural dealings with men belonging to every dispensation, including patriarchs, prophets, apostles, nay, the very heathen, we have "abundant revelations" in divers manners—among others,

What mountains?

by dreams and visions vivid as realities seen in the light of common day; but we have not one instance in the history of Jesus of any "vision-intercourse" between His spirit and the unseen world.

To what high mountain Jesus was led by the Spirit in order to endure this last terrible conflict with the enemy we are not informed. It may have been Hermon, which rears its snowy peak ten thousand feet above "the land," and where our Lord was afterwards transfigured when Moses and Elias appeared with Him in Glory, and where the same voice was heard from heaven as at his baptism again declaring, "This is my beloved Son." Or it may have been Pisgah, from whose top God showed to Moses the land of promise.

There would be a very peculiar significance in this temptation, giving to it a deeper meaning and interest, if it was this very land of promise which Satan specially pointed out to Christ, and whose kingdoms and glory he selected as representing the kingdoms and glory of that "world" which is discerned by the senses, or is alone capable of being desired and possessed by the spirit of evil.

But let us come to the temptation itself, and consider the nature of this last most subtle and overpowering attempt to shake the faith of the Son of God in His Father, and thus destroy His character and work as the Messiah.

We hear no more of those words suggestive of doubt regarding God as His Father,

“*If* thou be the Son of God.” That point Satan appears to assume as having been, for the time at least, settled. Here is one whose spirit of Sonship has, as yet, stood every trial; who has thus proved himself to be an exception to the whole human race, no member of which had ever been so severely attacked.

But if Jesus is now recognised as being verily “the Son of God,” what did this imply? Did the words, “This is my beloved Son,” heard at His baptism, receive from the temptations such a meaning as could not be attached to them in the case of any other son of man? Did the memories of a long past, the light of a day in Paradise whose sun had set in darkness, recall to Satan the existence of such a “Son of God” as he had never

seen in humanity? Could this be the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent?—the Son of David who was to sit on His Father's throne to reign over the house of Israel, and of whose kingdom there was to be no end? If so, then Satan, as "the prince of this world," must meet this King and measure His power with Him in a great and decisive battle, and, if possible, destroy both Him and His kingdom.

In this temptation, it will be observed that there is not only a proposal made to our Lord, as in the other temptations, but that for the first time a reward also is promised, a bribe offered, to induce the Saviour to comply with the request to worship the devil. In whatever form the enemy had previously

come, he appears now to have thrown off all disguise.

“Fall down and worship me!” The proposal was an audacious one — one which ought to revolt any rational being, and which must have been abhorrent to a holy and obedient Son of God. But is not every temptation to evil essentially of the same character, whether men see it or not in its true light? And were we possessed of the Spirit of “the Son,” would not evil in any form always appear to us as the one awful mystery of falsehood to be condemned and loathed? When we look at this temptation in the light of Christ, and from His point of view, we see how utterly impossible it was for Him to treat the proposal and the bribe in

any other way than He did. But, looking at both these as a wicked spirit like Satan must have looked, we can quite understand how he might have believed himself sure of success. He knew as a fact that what he now asked this Son of man to do had been done by all men and nations, the most refined and cultivated, in every age; and that the bribe he offered, in its magnificence and splendour, was such as never had been hitherto resisted by mere human nature; and why therefore suppose that this man would reject it? Not, therefore, without hope, but rather with unbounded confidence, did Satan once more address himself to the poor, suffering Jesus of Nazareth, weak and famishing, on the bleak mountain-top, worn in soul,

spirit, and body with the dread conflict of forty days.

“Fall down and worship me!” This was a proposal to become an idolater, and so recognise another person or power as being superior, or at least equal to Jehovah, and worthy of receiving the homage due to Him only. What could have induced Satan to make it? Was it because such idolatry is personally pleasing to himself—to his pride and love of power? Or was he influenced simply by the demoniacal passion of hate, in getting others to do that which he knew was displeasing to God? Or, finally, was idolatry then, as now, desired by him only as the means of alienating men from God, as the first certain step in the progress of evil, which

secures the ultimate triumph of all sin and crime?

Whatever Satan's motive may have been, it is evident that idolatry, in even its limited sense of the worship of idols, has played a dreadful part in the history of mankind. In this the whole world has verily been guilty before God! All mankind have conspired in not liking to retain God in their knowledge, and "in changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." And after all that has been done for "the education of the world," the dread fact remains, that at this moment the majority of the human race are idol worshippers.

One great object, we may observe in passing, of the whole Jewish dispensation was to educate men in the knowledge of the only living and true God, and consequently to abolish idolatry. Bible history begins with this education. The facts of creation, recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, all bear upon the primal truth of religion—that one living and true God is the only object of worship, because He is the Maker of all creatures and things in heaven and on earth. Hence He alone, and not anything created by Him in heaven or on earth, was to be worshipped. Man, it is also declared, was made after God's image, and dominion was given him over all other creatures on earth; and if so, the inference is evident, that he was not

to worship an image of himself or bow down before any creature. Again, the first commandment forbids having any other God before Jehovah, and the second forbids idolatry in any form, and denounces punishment to the third and fourth generation for this iniquity. And such iniquity of fathers it is declared would come down to succeeding generations. This would be the natural consequence of this kind of evil; because once the knowledge of God is lost through idolatry, all piety and all morality are thereby withered at their root, dried up at their source. No wonder therefore that there should be such constant and oft-repeated warnings and threatenings against idolatry in every chapter of the Book of the Law of

the Lord, along with all the minute and manifold arrangements made to save the nation from this crime. And yet how deep-seated, how fierce was the passion for idolatry, which at last blotted out Israel as a nation from history, and from which Judah was delivered only after terrible chastisements, ending with the Babylonish captivity!

This being so, the proposal of Satan was quite in keeping not only with his character and purposes, but warranted by his past success in the world. It was one which, as we have said, he had every reason to hope would succeed with this man, as it had done with every other, and that he himself should still be acknowledged as god of this world, to whom every knee should bow, and whom every

tongue should confess as Lord! The idea is, no doubt, dreadful; yet it is one expressed in the mysterious language of prophecy, when, referring to some evil one, it is said, "Power was given him over all kindred, tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth *shall worship him*, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life," and who therefore are not by choice sons of God.

But while Satan asked Jesus to fall down and worship him, he did not make it a condition of His doing so that He should not worship Jehovah also — if he could! Let Him serve mammon first, but God also if He desires or finds it possible to do so. This is the very compromise which deluded souls have so often attempted to make! Thus did

Aaron when he said, "To-morrow is a feast // to Jehovah," after having made the golden calf! It is this false compromise—this concealed refuge of lies—which was exposed by our Lord, when He said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve."

Let us now turn to the bribe offered by Satan to induce our Lord to recognise his supreme power and his claims to be indeed the god of this world. His bribe is, the kingdoms of this world and their glory.

What is meant by that "world" which includes within it all the glory offered by Satan? Much misunderstanding exists upon this point, which in every age has led to sin and folly, both in thought and practice.

By some this expression "the world" is applied to mere gross matter or body, and to whatever is palpable to the senses. As such it is looked upon as antagonistic to "the spirit;" and it is assumed accordingly that to be spiritual there must be as much as possible of a separation from the outward and visible, and that battle must be done with matter as with an enemy. This has been the root of innumerable immoral and superstitious practices. Others recognise by "the world" what is "secular," as opposed to what is "religious," or "ecclesiastical," or to what is called "the Church." Hence the dangerous and false line drawn between God in "civilisation" and God in "Christianity," God in "the world" and God in

“the Church;” between “worldly” duties and what are called “religious” duties; between a code of morals for the laity, as belonging to “the world,” and another for the clergy, as belonging to “the Church;” between a man’s life on ordinary days and ordinary occasions, and on “holy” days and on “holy” occasions,—with many consequences most injurious to true religion and true Christianity, which cannot here be dwelt upon.

But “the world” is defined by the Apostle John as including whatever is not “of the Father.” He says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life, is *not of the Father*, but is of the world." Therefore "the world" expresses that state of things, or idea of life, which is not "of the Father," and which is accepted therefore by those only in whom the love of the Father is not. Conversely, whatever is "of the Father" is not of "the world," but belongs to the kingdom of God. The world so defined is not therefore "the world" of nature, with all its glory; nor "the world" of art, with all its ideal beauty of form and colour: nor "the world" of social life, with its personal friendship and sympathies; nor "the world" of politics, of commerce, of literature, of science; nor other "worlds" manifold in which we live as human beings. And, not to multiply my illustrations, let me

say as briefly as possible, that the world which we must hate contains within it no arrangement, no work, no enjoyment, appointed or ordained by God: for whatever is of God may be received from Him, enjoyed in Him, and returned to Him. And I wish you to see this to help you to distinguish between "the world" in its Satanic sense, and "the world" in God's sense. The "evil world," therefore, which we are to hate, embraces *whatever is opposed to the will of God*. It is not, therefore, the beauty of the eye, but its lusts or evil desires; it is not the enjoyment of life, but its pride and folly; it is not even the pleasure of the senses, but unlawful pleasure; it is not eating and drinking, but gluttony and drunkenness; it is not marrying

or giving in marriage, but sensuality and uncleanness; it is not the mere world of rank, or riches, or power, for these are of God; it is not buying and selling, planting or building, the labour of the artisan in his peaceful workshop, or of the soldier or sailor on duty,—for all these are of the Father, being conditions imposed by himself on our present existence: it is not these, nor is it any passion, power, or faculty, or anything else which God has created or ordained; but it is, as I have said, the abuse or perversion of these, or the using of them in a way inconsistent with the purpose of God in giving them, and contrary to His supreme, holy, wise, and loving will. And thus a man seeking to avail himself of any of

God's gifts may, instead of doing so according to the mind of the Giver, turn them to the mere service of self without God, to minister to his vanity, idleness, greed, ambition, or animal passions, in a lawless and godless manner. "The world" is thus in the heart of man. If the kingdom of God be "within us," so may "the world," or the kingdom of Satan; and that which is *without* will belong to either as far as we are concerned, just as that which is *within* does. Accordingly, just as the heart of the true child of God by the divine alchemy of its life converts the wilderness and hunger into a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy, and in God possesses all things; so does the heart of a prodigal child, through the

satanic alchemy of its own corrupt life, convert "the kingdoms of the world and their glory" into its own poverty and death. And so "the god of this world," when possessing these kingdoms and their glory which he showed to Christ, was nevertheless the greatest pauper in the universe, while Jesus of Nazareth, who had no place where to lay His head, was the Heir of God and possessed all things!

The bribe then which Satan offered to our Lord was *life without God*—life in self—in the old man, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; boundless power, objects worthy of a grand ambition; art, and the gratification of every wish; all that could gratify man in soul and body

without the restrictions of duty and obedience to God. Such a bribe was verily in perfect keeping with his character as the "god of this world," and also with the high value which he now began to attach to this Son of God, as one who was worth purchasing at any price.

But was not such an offer a transparent falsehood, and one which could not deceive the most simple and ignorant? How could Satan, it may be asked, how could any creature, give the kingdoms of the world to another when they were not his to bestow? Satan was too subtle, however, to assume his possession of this power by his own right. Our Lord in resenting the first temptation had asserted the supreme autho-

riety and wisdom of all God's appointments ;
and now Satan declares that his power to
dispose of the kingdoms of the world and
their glory is according to God's appoint-
ment : "All this power will I give thee, and
the glory of them : for *that is delivered unto*
me ; and to whomsoever I will I give it."

As regards this power of Satan, a striking contrast exists between the material world and the spiritual world ; or the world of *things* and that of human *personalities*. In the one he is utterly powerless. Against the will of God as expressed in the movement of every star or beam of light, in the outburst of the hurricane, the growth of a flower, or the formation of a drop of dew, he can do no more than any intelligent

creature, whose sole power consists in yielding obedience to God's laws regulating Nature. But in the far higher and nobler world of personality it is different; for this implies *will*, and the awful power on the part of its possessor to choose that which may be against the will of God as certainly as wrong is against right, and falsehood is against truth. It is thus that Satan, without having any power to change that world "without" which is "of the Father," may so change the world "within" the spirit of man as to make the glory of the former minister to the desires of the latter, and make it the means of gratifying the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Who can limit the extent of

Satan's power within the kingdom of human spirits devoid of principle, preferring darkness to light, "children of disobedience," who are "led captive by Satan according to his will?" And what bribes may he not be able to offer to such and by such? It may be mysterious, but it is nevertheless the fact, that the kingdoms of this world, with all their power and glory, yea, all the noblest gifts of God, have been possessed by those who are described by the Apostle as "children of the devil," and who have practically acted as if they worshipped the devil, received all they had from him, and used it in his service. Have not multitudes who never even professed to serve God, but who gloried in their impiety and in

their shame, possessed all which this world could give without God? Has it not been often said of such by those who knew and loved God as their Father, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches?" While, on the other hand, many a child of God has confessed, "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." We may ask, indeed, what glory or power belonging to the kingdom of this world has not been dedicated to the cursed service of Satan? Have not kings fought and conquered, slain and tortured for

him, and laid all their power as an offering at the footstool of his dark throne? Have not wealth and beauty, genius and wit, learning and literature, been made to fall down and worship him? Have not clergymen and priests taught for him, and "churches" laboured for him, and statesmen governed for him? Has not every son of man wasted his portion of goods in the vile service of Satan? Surely, in a very true and awful sense, he is the god of this world, and has the power of giving, to those who will fall down and worship him, the kingdoms of this world with their power and glory!

Moreover, when the devil said to our Lord, "All this power will I give thee," what was there in the visible condition of that world

to contradict his claim of power, or to make his offer palpably impossible, or inconsistent with the acknowledged government of God? What was the state of Rome and of its mighty empire? If we read the Apostle Paul's account of it as recorded in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans—an account corroborated by every other authentic history—we learn how Satan was worshipped, how idolatry reigned, how God was forgotten, and all His glorious gifts perverted to the basest passions of human nature. What was the state of Greece? Abounding idolatry, and the solitary altar to the unknown God, testified to the supremacy there of the Prince of moral Darkness. And, not to speak of other portions of the earth

sunk in deepest midnight gloom, what was the moral condition of Judea even? Where were the signs in that favoured land, in that temple of the whole earth, that chosen spot, of any power greater than the power of Satan? What was the condition of the rulers of the people, of the expounders of the law, of the very priests at the altar, of the Pharisees at their prayers, when the Baptist had described them as the brood of the old serpent, a very "generation of vipers?" Did not our Lord say of them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do?" What was the condition of Jerusalem, the city of the great King, where he had placed his name? The cry of "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

reveals its condition. And, finally, while the idolatrous nations of the earth which served Satan, and did not profess to worship God, were the most powerful and influential, possessing all glory and riches, the only nation upon earth which kept alive any knowledge of the only living and true God was trodden under foot by heathen rulers, and the sceptre of earthly power had departed from Judah!

It was in such circumstances that the prince of this world lifted up his proud head as he surveyed his kingdom of darkness, and practically said, "All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me! I know that thou art promised a kingdom, even the throne of thy father David, and this very land which thou beholdest, as well as all the

kingdoms of the world. Thou shalt have these with all their power and glory! At this moment the people are longing for a king, and would gladly place thee upon the throne, but thou canst not accomplish this without me, for I am the god of this world, according to the appointment of thy Father. Behold, accordingly, how the world acknowledges me, and how all its glory and power are used in my service! But it knows not nor serves thy Father. These rulers and priests do not His will, but mine only; as I lead they follow; as I speak they listen; and as I command they obey; my bread they eat, my kingdom they advance; Herod is mine, Pilate is mine, the priests are mine, the people are mine! I alone, therefore, can give thee this throne,

and the kingdoms of the world. Only acknowledge this fact by once falling down and worshipping me ; be like all the world, and all the world shall be thine !” And thus the deceiver would have blotted out Gethsemane and Calvary from the world’s history, belied the promises of God, destroyed the hopes of the Church, extinguished the Light of the World, slain its Life, and buried it to rise no more !

What will the sorely tempted and tried One do—the humble man of Nazareth—the weak Son of Mary, and the suffering Son of God ? Shall He yield to the hoary veteran of evil, to this mighty conqueror of the kingdoms of the world ? Shall He for this joy set before Him refuse the cross and avoid the shame ? Shall He put aside the cup of agony, the sceptre of

derision, the crown of thorns, and, in their stead, receive the cup of this world's joy, the sceptre of mere earthly government, and be crowned by Satan? Shall He accept of life without God, a life of self with all that could gratify it, or shall He accept of God's will, although it may bring Him to agony, to the cross, and to the tomb? On His reply hangs the future history of the moral Universe! Calm and peaceful was everything around, and from earth to sky God's glory shone as a Shekinah of love—shall all be suddenly changed into blackest night and eternal desolation? Was there "silence in heaven" half-an-hour? And did principalities and powers gaze in awful suspense upon the scene, and mighty angels tremble for the

honour of God's government, and every holy creature wonder at the dispensation which had perilled its existence on a weary Son of man? And did holy beings desire to surround Him with their glittering legions, and hurl the deceiver into the abyss from whence he came? But the heavens remain calm as at creation's dawn, and exhibit no signs of confusion or alarm; the breeze whispers peacefully on the mountain-top, and the ocean's waves gleam afar in bright sunshine. Fear not, ye His angels who do His commandments, listening to the voice of His word! Fear not, ye patriarchs and prophets who died in faith, not having received the promises, yet seeing all the glory that was to be! The government is laid, by unerring wisdom, upon the

shoulders of One who is mighty in battle, because mighty in meekness, in humility, in the child-like faith that overcometh the world, in the love that seeketh not her own, and casteth out fear. It became "the Captain of our salvation to be made perfect through sufferings," and thus to "destroy the works of the devil;" and so there is heard from His holy lips the majestic reply which banishes the tempter—"Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve!"

He thus spoke as a true Son, who glorified His Father by faith and love. He spoke as a true Priest, whose whole life was a self-sacrifice, a worship of the only living and true God. He spoke as a true King, whose king-

dom was not of this world, but in the hearts of redeemed men; and whose prayer to His Father ever was, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

These words, "Get thee behind me, Satan," were an epitome of the future history of the world; a prophecy of all the glory that should be; a light ushering in the brighter day seen beyond the shadow of the cross. As He uttered them, Satan was henceforth doomed to depart from the weary and oppressed earth, and the Son of man to step forth before him, ever advancing to take possession of human spirits, and make all men kings and priests, by enabling them through faith in himself to worship the Lord their God, and to serve Him only.

These solemn and touching words being uttered, it is added, "Satan left Him for a season." But for a season only! How and when he returned we shall afterwards consider, with other interesting questions connected with these several temptations.

When Satan departed, we are told that "angels ministered to Him!" How soothing the picture! It is like the calm which succeeded the midnight tempest on the Sea of Galilee, or like a flood of sunshine pouring itself on a mountain-top after the dark thunder-storm with its loud peals and flashing lightning, has passed away, leaving the sky without a cloud in its depths of azure.

Angels "ministered to Him!" These holy ones who "minister to the heirs of salvation"

now minister to their Saviour. They had witnessed the mysterious scene, but they could not take part in the war, for it was one not between physical strength and weakness, but between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, love and hate, faith and unbelief.

But now that the battle has been fought, and a complete victory for the first time on earth achieved—now that the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost has been manifested in a way never before seen in the universe of God—these unfallen angels who kept their first estate were permitted to draw near the Man of Sorrows, whose every feeling was, in the depths of His holy soul, torn with a sore anguish which they could not, because not human

beings, fully comprehend, yet great was the joy and reward of their loving and sympathetic hearts in thus lavishing upon Him their tender ministrations.

Angels "ministered to Him!" The temptation began in the wilderness, with the companionship of wild beasts and of Satan, but it ends amid the smiles and joys of ministering angels—a type of the whole work of the Messiah, by which the world is redeemed from a savage wilderness and a wicked usurpation, and becomes a holy mountain of the Lord, with Jesus as the object of supreme love to a countless family of adoring spirits—a type, too, of the life of every child, in whose weakness the strength of Christ is perfected, and who thereby holds

fast his confidence to the end, and who may begin his work on the earth as a son of God baptized of the Spirit, amidst temptation and weariness and gloom, yet in the end be more than conqueror, and receive the welcome of an innumerable company of angels !

The essence of this temptation, as we have seen, was to seek *life without God*, or to lose faith in the absolute perfection and sanctification of a godly life, the abuse of things, according to the Satanic principle, in the worship and service of self. Satan spoke as the "prince of this world"—not as the actual possessor or ruler of this physical world, which does not, unless possibly* in

* Genesis viii. 21, 22.

its soil, bear the impress of sin or of the footsteps of the destroyer, nor any trace of his hands in any one thing, or in any law within the limits of a creation as fair, orderly, and perfect as when its Creator pronounced it very good, and the sons of God shouted with joy. The whole earth is now, as it was long ages before sin entered into it, full of the glory of the Lord, and of His only! But Satan spoke as the representative and "ruler of the *darkness* of this world," which exists only in the spirit of living persons who love the darkness rather than the light. He spoke as the god of that "world" which is "not of the Father," but originates in the will of the creature; whose principle is self-will, independent of and con-

trary to the righteous will of God ; which, instead of seeking freedom and strength and happiness in God, seeks all without Him ; and which, instead of accepting and using all the generous gifts bestowed by righteous love for righteous ends, perverts and abuses them in the service of self, making them minister to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, thereby making their possessor poor and needy, blind and naked—a miserable prodigal wasting all his substance. The object of Satan was to induce Jesus of Nazareth to accept this kind of life, and to join in the universal idolatry of individualism. He would thus have destroyed Jesus as a true Son, whose life was loving subjection to God the Father ;

and as a true King, who possessed all things because he thus possessed God in love; and as a true Priest, whose glory was the sacrifice of self, and the doing of his Father's will.

This third temptation — the last grand assault, after long and terrible battles, on the impregnable moral position of the Great King — was a crisis in the warfare which had been going on since creation, and which will continue until Christ come again with complete salvation. And it is deeply interesting—confining ourselves to the contest waged by Satan against the kingdom of Christ—to watch his unremitting attempts to destroy every visible sign of that kingdom on earth, to put to death every true and illustrious subject of it, and upon its ruins to rear and esta-

blish his own apostate kingdom of idolatry, darkness, and death. His policy has been the same in every age, and can be traced along the whole history of the Church of Christ. Let us glance at some of the leading events in this world-campaign.

No sooner is Adam, holy and spotless, "the son of God," crowned with glory and honour, and made a king, than Satan, the enemy, tempts and dethrones him! The third temptation in Eden was, "Ye shall be as gods."

This was an appeal to man, so fearfully and wonderfully made after God's image. The mere thought, or idea, of being as a god could not be conceived of or entertained by any being but one who was made God-like, and whose end was to be like God. The

pride of individualism is atheistic, but is nevertheless the perversion of a divine nature. It is a king's son who dares to aspire to *the* throne — or even to *a* throne — of an independent kingdom. God's purpose in regard to man was that he should reign as a king for ever and ever, but only by being a priest, and by sharing the spirit of self-sacrifice which, I dare to affirm, although the expression may be challenged, God Himself manifested when He "gave His Son," and which the Son manifested when "He offered up Himself." But man sought to obtain this glory in Satan's way, and by what was a lie and a contradiction to his own being. Eve was tempted by the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," for "when she

saw" — what? and how? — "that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat," and so the crown fell from his brow! In seeking self he lost himself, and the king became a beggar! The cord of dependence on God, of obedience, love, sonship, was thus snapped between man and the Father—*consequently*, between man and man as brethren. The light being extinguished which revealed the Father, there was no light to reveal the brother. The reign of God thus ceasing in the spirit of man, the reign of self and of Satan, the liar and the murderer, began. This was made visible in the murder of Abel by his brother

Cain, and was soon so established over the world, that after sixteen centuries one family only was found righteous ; while all the kingdoms of the world, with its arts and manufactures, its music and poetry, its family and social life, fell down and worshipped Satan, and accordingly was filled with " violence," and all flesh became corrupt, and " the thoughts of man's heart were evil, and only evil continually." God saved the earth from destruction by bringing a flood on the world of the ungodly. So ended Satan's old kingdom before the flood !

Human history proceeds, centuries pass on, mankind increases, and soon we see an attempt on a great scale to form and mould a nationality upon the devil's policy of pride

and selfishness. Men wished to make to *themselves* a name, and get for themselves renown, and so they would commence a great capital, and cement society by stone and lime! That scheme becomes Babel—confusion—a *scattering* and not a uniting. But God's purpose was to unite men as subjects of a very different kingdom, whose bonds were to be moral and spiritual, whose life would be faith in Himself; and accordingly at that very time He calls Abraham, in whom, or in whose descendants, by the possession of His spirit, and who in this inner and not merely by outward unity, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. How marvellously the great kings in this kingdom are preserved, when Satan would cast them

down ; and how God in providence ever said, “ Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm ! ” See Noah in the ark ; Abraham alone among his enemies ; Jacob threatened by Esau ; Joseph in prison ; Moses in the ark of bulrushes—and many similar instances.

Years roll on—the panorama of history moves past us. We see the kingdom of God well-nigh crushed by the power under whose protection it was increasing in numbers and gathering in strength to possess the earth in force. A great attempt is made by Satan to destroy the hopes of the world through his allies the Pharaohs. He will wear the people out, and degrade them by slavery, or massacre them in infancy, and set a very image of

himself in proud rebellious self-reliance upon the throne of Egypt. But the Church is brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand, and that event was the greatest in the history of the two kingdoms since creation. What a marvellous, visible struggle was it with plagues, pestilence, darkness and death, magic and magicians! Satan seemed to enter into Pharaoh, and to possess him as with demonic power, and to cry, in the agony of pride or despair, "I will *not* let them go!" But go they shall. The life of the world depends on it. Moses, the type of Christ, in the spirit of his great antitype, despised the kingdoms of this world, and would not worship Satan or his idōls. He preferred the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt,

and would not have life without God. In the power of faith he led forth the Israelites ; crossed the Red Sea, when again ocean waves seemed to baptize the earth with new hope. Then was there sung a song which was an echo from the Rock of Ages, "the Song of Moses and the Lamb," to be sung again when the last enemy is destroyed, "Thy right hand hath become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. *The Lord shall reign for ever and ever !*"

The combat continues. Satan tries to destroy the people in the wilderness by seeking to destroy their faith, and sometimes their lives by his agents. But for their invisible King, who ever preserves a seed to serve Him, he would have succeeded. They fell

before the very temptations which our Lord resisted. They lost faith in God their Father when suffering from hunger, and declared that man did live by bread alone. They tempted the Lord at Meribah, saying, "Is He among us or not?" and demanded a sign from Moses. They also fell down and worshipped Satan in abominable idolatries. Here, in following out the analogy between the temptations of Jesus as the Head of the race and also of the Church, I must notice how the third temptation on the Mount is one with the third temptation of the Church in the wilderness, as well as that of man, represented by Adam in Eden. After the day of temptation at Meribah, which was parallel in order of time and in its spirit to the second

temptation on the pinnacle of the temple, there followed the great battle between "the Church in the wilderness" and the Amalekites, who represented the kingdoms of "the world." Then it was that Moses ascended the mountain, and overcame the enemy by the prayer of faith, which was analogous to the faith of Christ on the mountain when He refused the offer of the kingdoms of this world. But forty years afterwards there was—according to the narrative in the Pentateuch—another day of temptation in which Meribah was repeated at Kadesh (Num. xx. 13). In this repetition of the second temptation, the faith of Moses failed! He confesses the sin—he records its punishment: for he was forbid to establish God's kingdom

in Canaan. Then again he ascends a mountain—but to die !

After “the day of temptation” at the second Meribah, analogous to the second temptation of Jesus on the temple, there followed the idolatry of the golden calf, or the Egyptian bull, Apis—the practical worship of Satan, the *bribe* for doing which was, no doubt, “the gratification of the lust of the flesh,” in connection with this worship, as it is with all idolatrous worship in every land and in all history. Aaron, indeed, in his moral weakness, yet with inner love to God, wished to make a compromise, and to spiritualise it according to its original idea as a symbol of the Creator ; and he said, accordingly, “We have a feast of Jehovah to-morrow ;

let us make to ourselves a calf." Now while there were but three temptations of our Lord, and three great temptations of Israel, one vice in spirit and essence, there is this difference between them—that the second temptation in the wilderness was twice repeated, and the third three times repeated. There were the temptations at the Meribahs corresponding in their essence to the second temptation of our Lord; and in addition to these, and following them, were three others corresponding to the third temptation of Christ. Of these last there were three temptations in the wilderness. *First*, the attack by the Amalekites, representing the kingdoms of the world and their endeavour to destroy the representations of the kingdom of God; there

was, after that, the idolatry of the golden calf, with its vile lusts; and finally the vain attempt on the part of Balaam to destroy Israel, and to aid the idolatrous kingdoms of the heathen, and also to destroy God's people by idolatry, accompanied by the old bribes of the lust of the flesh. Thus the more Satan was resolved, the more fierce he became, and the more he renewed his attacks in the forms which had hitherto been found by him to be the most successful. In the last of these attacks there was, to him, a mysterious failure. Balaam was compelled to acknowledge the coming of God's kingdom when he said, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre out of Israel," "Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion." But he succeeded

nevertheless in causing Israel to sin, and but for the grace of the great King and His love to the world, the false man would have succeeded in destroying the kingdom of Israel by his vile policy—which was the suggestion of Satan through the women of Moab. This miserable and wicked prophet who had light, but not life, was soon slain with the sword, which, in awful and stern but loving righteousness, was unsheathed to punish Israel, and save the kingdom of God from being utterly overthrown by the world.

But let us proceed with the history of the kingdom of God as represented by Israel. When the people came to the borders of Canaan, and were about to take possession of the land promised centuries before to

Abraham and his descendants as the place in which the nation was to be trained and the world prepared for the advent of the great King, we trace the same policy of Satan in the attempt made to terrify the people by the report brought by the spies regarding the number of the idolatrous inhabitants, their great size and strength, and the impregnable character of their cities. But for God's helping hand and overruling providence, the attempt would have succeeded. All the tribes united in one great conspiracy to return to Egypt, and to reverse the Exodus. Four men only maintained their faith in God—Caleb, Joshua, Aaron, and Moses—and these four lonely men are surrounded by a fierce multitude determined to stone them to

death. What would the history of the world have been had Satan succeeded in extinguishing these four lights—in destroying these four witnesses for the living God, and ending the history of Israel in the heathendom of Egypt? What a crisis that movement was in the contest between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, the righteous God and the god of this world! It was then, when all seemed lost, that God Himself came to the rescue, and His light flashed from the tabernacle—and Moses fell on his face and cried to God to forgive the rebellious people; and his intercessions were heard, and the promise made, even in this the darkest and most hopeless hour in history: “*As surely as I live, my glory shall*

fill the earth !” It was God, not man, who uttered these words at such a time ! (Num. xiii., xiv.)

What, again, was the history of this kingdom from and during the period it was visibly established in Canaan ? What but a constant—alas ! too often successful—struggle through the influence and the power, the threats and the bribes of the kingdoms of the heathen within and around Judea, to alienate the nation from its allegiance to their King, to weaken and destroy them by unbelief, to tempt them by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, to become sensual and idolatrous ; in one word, to fall down and worship the devil, or perish ? How often do we hear him saying, “ Who

are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of *my* hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" How sunk was God's kingdom in the time of the judges—these witnesses for the Invisible King! How Satan triumphed over Saul, and well-nigh destroyed David, simple yet grand in his allegiance; and made sad havoc with Solomon, who, for the kingdoms and their glory, fell down, for a time at least, and worshipped him, until the kingdom was divided, and the devil's worship set up by ten tribes at Samaria for two hundred and forty years, and the temple of Jerusalem itself was polluted by idolatry and all wickedness!

There were noble testimonies for God ever

and anon borne by His representatives—as by Asa, at the battle of Mareshah (2 Chron. xiv. 9—12); Jehoshaphat at the great battle of Berachah (2 Chron. xx. 1—30). But so desperate did things become in Israel that Elijah cried out, “I only am left!” And at last the kingdom of darkness seems to cover the earth, when the nation is carried back to Satan’s stronghold in Babylon, Jerusalem and the temple destroyed, and the public worship of Jehovah no longer recognised in any kingdom or nation on earth! Satan reigns! In Babylon he renews his old Egyptian policy, and hopes to annihilate the hated people of God. The roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour will cast Daniel into a lion’s den, and the

three young men into the fiery furnace. Nay, he will attempt the grand scheme, through Haman the Agagite, of massacring the whole nation. But in vain. "Fear not, O worm Jacob! thy King is glorious in the midst of thee." Israel is preserved, for the word of the Lord hath spoken it; and they return to Zion, with songs of everlasting joy, and they rear the second temple, whose glory was to excel the first, because He who was the true "desire of all nations" was to come to it.

Centuries pass on. A great King has been promised and long expected, even by the Gentile nations. Daniel had heralded Messiah the Prince, and indicated the day of His coming. That glorious day at last dawns in the fulness of time. Gabriel

announces to the meek and lowly virgin that she "shall bring forth a Son, who shall be called the Son of the Most High," to whom the Lord His God shall "give the throne of His father David," who shall "reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end." Suddenly, to the wonder and alarm of Satan, a multitude of the heavenly host gather round the earth, and sing loud hallelujahs of glory to God in the highest, of peace on earth, and goodwill to men, as they proclaim the birth of a Saviour in the city of David. The Magi from the East, instructed by the prophecies of the great Persian Governor Daniel, come, seeking the King, in order to do Him homage. Satan is alarmed, and seeks through Herod

and his men of war to kill the child; but the child escapes, and for a while there is deep repose. No miracle of power is seen, no voice of authority is heard, for Jesus the King grows up silently as "a tender plant" among the mountains of Galilee. But suddenly the Baptist appears in the wilderness. The nation is roused. John speaks of the kingdom being at hand. Jesus is baptized, and the declaration, "Behold the Lamb of God," follows the heavenly testimony, "This is my beloved Son!" *Immediately* when thus inaugurated into the ministerial office, He is led into the wilderness. The temptation and the victory followed, and then through His whole after-life did Jesus manifest those glorious principles which He had witnessed

to in His conflict with Satan. He was in a wilderness, and had no place where to lay His head, but He never tempted God, but trusted Him as a little child. He showed His power as King by casting out devils, who—as if they had heard from Satan the tidings—confessed that He was the Son of God. The very first sermon which He preached was the fruit of His victory, for as a King He proclaimed deliverance to the captives.

During the last hours of our Lord's life on earth, Satan was revealed by Him whose eye pierces the darkness which would conceal its "prince." When our Lord announced, in that great and momentous crisis of human history, that "Satan desired to sift as wheat" those to whom was given the

mighty talent of carrying out His purposes in regard to humanity; that "Satan had entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot;" and when He described that time as "the hour and power of darkness;" He surely spoke in harmony with all we are told of this personal "enemy," this "wicked one;" and not as if merely personifying the evil principle in man. When therefore the transactions of these hours are seen in the light of this fact of Satan's presence, and of a blind, because wicked, spirit of hate and malice, they receive a still deeper meaning than we ordinarily attach to them. For Satan appears to have come upon the awful scene, not so much to tempt as to torment; or, if we dare so to speak, not to repeat temptations, which he

had in despair given up, but rather with the malice of a fiend to turn all in which the Lord had professed His faith, and all that He had refused to be and do, into the bitter irony of hate. For example :—Had He rejoiced in being a Son of God? If so, where, now, were His brethren? Was He not deserted and left alone? Had He then failed in training any to recognise and return His love, and to share His love to God? “Behold thy ‘brethren!’—they all forsake thee and fly, and one kisses thee and sells thy life, not for the kingdoms of the world, but for thirty pieces of silver! Canst thou still be a son and brother to those who thus hate thee? Curse them and die!” Again, had He in the wilderness confessed His trust in God and in

all His appointments? But now that He is nailed to the cross, the taunt is heard, "He trusted in God! Let Him deliver Him now, seeing He delighted in Him; for He said, I am the Son of God!" On the temple He would not cast Himself down, or seek any "sign" from heaven to strengthen a faith which needed it not.—"If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God." Thou *wouldst not* cast thyself down there in faith, thou *canst not* come down now that others may believe!" Had He refused to be made a king in the devil's way, and only accepts of kingship in God's

way, by being a Son and a Priest?—"So be it! thou shalt be a King, but the cross shall be thy throne, and the thorns thy crown! Behold the little thou hast won from thy Father, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!'" But this blessed Jesus overcame every temptation, and every taunt by the strength of His faith and the omnipotence of His meekness and love. His love of man and of His very enemies survives all their hate, and the perfect Brother offers up the prayer, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" The love of the perfect Son burns brightly to the last and shines elsewhere when it ceases to shine here in the loud cry, "*Father!* into thy hands I commit my spirit;"—for "He did not hide

His face from Him, but when He cried unto Him He heard ! ”

Thus did Jesus exemplify during His whole life the principles which He had asserted at His temptation, and which were, until He died, constantly assailed by the enemy of mankind. He was but anticipating the grand result, when speaking the day before He died, of how when lifted up He would draw all men unto Him (John xii. 20—33), He said with triumphant joy, “ Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out ! ”

The cross was followed by the tomb ; and probably Satan believed that all was now over with the King, and that He was secure under the power of death in the sealed grave

and with the heathen guard watching by it. But, O horror! "very early" in the morning of a new day in the world's history, the tomb is burst asunder—the Conqueror rises with the glorious greeting to the Universe, "All hail!" He leads captivity captive. He remains forty days on earth speaking the things pertaining to *the kingdom of God*. He ascends blessing the earth. The ear of faith hears the cry, "Open, ye everlasting gates, that the King of Glory may come in." All power is given to Him in heaven and earth for his Church. He establishes "a kingdom which cannot be moved," and against which "the gates of hell cannot prevail."

The great battle on the Mount between

the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of our Lord is still continued, and all believers are called to share in it. Satan has plied, and does ply still, the same kind of temptations. He has tried to shake the allegiance of the Church in God the Father, by means of outward trials and persecutions. He has tried to tempt her from simple trust in God's promises, and to demand signs and lying wonders in answer to the unbelieving question, "Is God among us or not?" He has bribed the Church with earthly power, and riches, and glory, with the idolatry of persons, of symbols, of forms, of organizations, of sacraments, and of "religions," in which God Himself is not the all in all!

Whatever be the true interpretation of the

Book of Revelation, it is singularly attractive to those uninstructed even in its deeper meaning, as a wonderful picture of this gigantic world-struggle between right and wrong. Amidst the mysteries of clouds and darkness, earthquakes and storms, famines and pestilences—amidst the confusion of hurrying armies and burning cities, we hear the clang of loud trumpets, the cries of rage and despair mingling with the shouts of ecstatic victory. Ever and anon we catch glimpses in “the current of the heady fight” of the respective leaders of the opposing forces. The one is called “Apollyon the Destroyer”—“the angel of the bottomless pit”—“the dragon”—“the old serpent”—“the devil.” The other is a

glorious Conqueror, who "in righteousness makes war,"—He is "the faithful and true Witness." His "vesture is dipped in blood." Over that robe of royal purple and the sign of priestly suffering—a name is written, which is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Sometimes the tide of battle seems to the eye of the uninformed spectator to rush so strongly against the right, that the weary cry is heard, "Lord, how long?" "The world follows the beast," and is deceived by his "miracles and lying wonders"—until at last the battle so gains on the side of righteousness, and the enemy is so driven back beyond hope of rallying, and the devil and his angels so cast down, that, as on the day of Egypt's overthrow, a jubilee

hymn of praise swells to heaven—“*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Anointed*, and He shall reign for ever and ever.” “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art and wast and art to come, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and reigned.” “Thou art holy, and all nations shall worship Thee; for Thy judgments are manifest.”

“Then cometh the end!” When? The Lord alone knows! But after Satan has done his worst, and the reality of truth and righteousness in man by the grace of God has been proved by every test, and strengthened and confirmed for evermore, there comes at last the period which is the

culminating point of the world's eventful history and the Redeemer's long-anticipated perfect joy, when He shall have put all His enemies under His feet, and begun that universal reign of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:—and then, as if to connect the latter-day glory with the temptations of the olden time, there appears in the calm heavens from which the clouds of war have passed away and all storms are for ever hushed into unbroken peace, a *high mountain*, from whence we behold a vision of the kingdom of God realised on earth, such as may have passed before the eye of the Man of Sorrows when in faith He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "And He said unto me, It is done! I am Alpha

and Omega, the beginning and the end. He who overcometh *shall inherit all things*, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. And He carried me in the spirit to a great and *high mountain*, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, from God, having the glory of God. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and *the Lamb* are the temple of it. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the *kings of the earth* shall bring their glory and their honour into it. And there shall be no curse, but the *throne* of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. *And his servants shall worship Him!*” Glorious and blissful vision!

But would it have been thus if Jesus, for the immediate possession of the kingdoms of the world and their glory, had done honour to their prince—had taken the crown Satan offered, and refused the cup His Father gave? Where now are those earthly kingdoms?—where now the glory which they then, or ever possessed? Where is the glory of Egypt? It is recorded in her tombs: her idols have fallen, her temples are in ruins! Where is Babylon, once Satan's chief city of crime and splendour? It hath "become heaps" and pools of water, "an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant!" Where is Greece—learned, artistic, eloquent philosophic Greece? And where is old Rome, the mistress of the world? And where will

Rome as she now is be, if she falls down as an idolater in order to obtain the kingdoms of the world and their glory? Judea, too, is trodden down by hostile oppressors. Her crown is in the dust. All have passed away! Ah! what a mirage, what a lie, was that world which Satan the deceiver and the liar offered when he said, "All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me!" Verily the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he who does the will of God abideth for ever! The kingdom of Satan on earth is doomed to perish, but that kingdom whose glory is the priestly service and worship of the living God, and of Him only, is established in the souls of redeemed men, and "cannot be moved," but must remain during

the endless life of its adorable King; "His name shall endure for ever : His name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in Him : all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever ; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory ; Amen, and Amen."

Before concluding these thoughts on the Temptation of our Lord, I would suggest a few practical lessons to be learned from the whole narrative.

1. Temptation itself is not evil. Temptation to evil is evil in the tempter, but not necessarily evil to the tempted. Our life here

will not be understood if we see it as a period of *probation* only, during which God, as our Judge, is settling between us and Him the one question merely of faith or no faith in Christ by a series of *proofs* applied to our inner and outer life. We must see it also, or much more, as a period of *education*, in which He, as our Father and Teacher, is training and disciplining each of us, as disciples, in a way adapted to our *individual* case. Temptation is thus permitted to play a part, and do its work in this earthly school. Whether it will build up or destroy our character must be determined by the fact of our willingness to be "taught of God," to "learn of Christ," and to be "subject to the Father of our spirits, and live,"

or to remain in the narrow and false circle of self-confidence, self-dependence, and self-will. Temptation to evil is not, therefore, a waste power in the universe, even when the tempter is the devil. Through the Divine Spirit in the tempted, it is made an occasion of highest good, though still itself remaining evil, and nothing but evil, in the wicked tempter. Temptation may awaken and quicken in us a deep sense of our own weakness, and thus cast us on God as our only refuge and strength; it may, by its constant recurrence, induce us to *abide* in God, and to feel more and more the necessity of the Holy Spirit abiding in us, and also make the atoning and intercessory work, and loving presence, and watchful care, and

personal experience of Jesus, and His victory over Satan, more profoundly precious to our souls. Finally, it may indirectly glorify God in being the occasion of revealing, by means of our faith, obedience, patience, meekness, courage, and perfect peace, the reality and efficacy of the grace of God working in us; and the reality also of His love, which can so attract the heart and fill the spirit as to make us rise above, and reject all the bribes of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, esteeming them as refuse when compared with life in God. In one word, temptation *to* evil may but prove fire to separate the dross from the gold, and may, in its results, at once evidence our faith, strengthen

our faith, and reward our faith. Accordingly, as Jesus was tempted at the moment when He was declared to be the Son of God, and as His temptation was the occasion of His glorifying God as a Father, so may it be with every son whom He loveth. It is thus that His chastisement will make us "partakers of His holiness;" and though "not for the present joyous, but grievous," will "afterwards work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those who are exercised thereby." We might therefore address all who are in any way tried by evil: "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that he trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work,

that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." And again: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

2. Another lesson is taught us by the manner in which our Lord resisted these several temptations. He always appealed to the Word of God. "It is written" was His repeated affirmation. The reverent manner in which our Lord habitually referred to the Old Testament Scriptures cannot fail to convey to us the impression of His having

recognised them as possessing an authority independent of Him, but which He rejoiced to corroborate in the most solemn moments of His life. Whatever errors we may presume to have discovered in them, not a trace of any such discovery appears in the teaching of Christ, nor does He ever speak as if He did not accept them in their integrity, as if they were not in harmony with all His teaching, and sufficient for Him and all His purposes. Among His fullest and most solemn recognitions of the Old Testament was that given *after* His death, and on the great *day of His Resurrection*, when He “opened up the Scriptures” to his disciples while walking along the road to Emmaus, until “their hearts burnt within them.” Then it was that,

“beginning at *Moses, and all the Prophets,* He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself;” and on *that same evening,* He told them in an upper room of Jerusalem, as He had often done before — “that all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the law of Moses,* and *in the Prophets,* and *in the Psalms,* concerning Him.”

In the same spirit of reverence and faith He also quoted from these Scriptures in that momentous crisis of His life when, entering on His public ministry and full of the Holy Spirit, He was tempted by Satan. These facts convey to us not only the lesson, which many people much need to learn, of reverence for writings which were held in such esteem

by "the best and holiest man who ever lived," as all allow our Lord to have been, and by the Divine Son of God who is "the Truth," as Christians believe Him to be; but the special lesson that when tempted we should avail ourselves of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The more we know ourselves, and the subtle forms in which temptations come—the more shall we see the wisdom of having God's clear command, "Thou shalt not," to fall back upon, and on these to take our stand as in an impregnable fortress. This does not imply that we must thus fall back upon mere authority *only*, without seeing its righteousness or its reasonableness. But it is a great strength and blessing to have authority on

which we may fall back *first*. The fact that this does not necessarily require any process of argument or reasoning, but is such as a child may act upon, constitutes its safeguard. For it would be often at the moment of temptation a great danger to be obliged to have recourse to mere argument. When forced to adopt in our defence our present feelings, or the conclusions of our intellect, or scraps of knowledge from observation and experience, or what seems a clever policy, then indeed we may be soon overthrown by an enemy far more subtle than ourselves. This danger is greatest when sinful desires within are ready to betray us into the hands of the enemy, and are disposed to listen to the guile of his fair and

corrupting speeches and false promises ; and when faith is weak and the pleasures of sin present, and the consequences of wrong-doing remote. But when, on the other hand, we can shut our ears to every argument, however plausible, and to every “ way of putting ” the temptation, however specious, and refuse all further parley, through faith in some clear authoritative declaration of our loving Father who knoweth our frame, and of our wise Teacher who will ever guide us in a path of righteousness, safety, and peace, then shall we be able to say, “ ‘ *It is written!* ’—I ask no more!—‘ Get thee behind me, Satan ! ’ ”

But although the teaching of his children by a wise earthly father, or of ourselves by our Father in heaven, *begins* with authority,

it does not necessarily end there. Our Teacher, while demanding implicit faith in what He says because He says it, and implicit obedience because He commands it, does not forbid us, but rather invites and commands us to *see the truth as true for ourselves*, and to perceive with our own consciences the wisdom and righteousness of the Authority which says, "Thou shalt not!" until we are able to reply, not only in the spirit of "blind obedience," "Amen, I *shall* not"—but in the spirit of a loving choice, "Amen, I *will* not." It was thus Christ declared that He did not call His disciples *servants*—who were to obey mere authority—but *friends*, who would obey because sympathizing with the righteousness of the authority—"for the servant knoweth

not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Accordingly, while it is our privilege when tempted to fall back with unreserved confidence upon God's Word when it gives us light, by command, by warning, by promise, or by threat, yet it is a higher privilege still to penetrate into the righteous *principle* involved in that authority, so that we should obey not as “servants” only, but also as “friends” who recognise *the truth for themselves* which they first received on the mere authority of the truth-speaker. Oh, how earnest should we be that instead of the shocking irreverence for God's holy Word which abounds, and the gross and shameful

ignorance of it which exists among professing Christians, and the bold self-confidence in which many glory, who have but a few sayings or opinions of society to guide them amidst the temptations of the world, we should let "the Word of God dwell in us richly in all wisdom," that so we "may be thoroughly furnished unto good works."

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the

whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Amen!

THE END.

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