

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE EXPOSITOR.



THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

MATT. iv. 1-11 ; MARK i. 12, 13 ; LUKE iv. 1-13.

How is the Temptation of Christ to be understood? As a history, a parable, a myth, or an undesigned, though not accidental, compound of the three? If real, was its reality actual, a veritable face-to-face struggle of opposed persons, with personalities no less real that they represented universal interests, and, by their conflict, determined universal issues? Or was its reality ideal, subjective, a contest of rival passions, principles, and aims? If not real, whence came the narrative? From Jesus or his disciples, or, in a manner more or less unconscious, partly from both? Did He clothe a general truth or a mental experience in the drapery of historical narrative? Or did they mistake a parable for history? Or, with imaginations dazzled by his person and transfigured by his words and works, did they either simply create or expand from a small germ this, while mythical, symbolical and ideally true tale of the struggle of celestial light and strength with infernal darkness and subtlety?

These questions confront us the moment we attempt to understand the story of the Temptation.

It has been interpreted by a rigid realism, which, unable to conceive any except a formal and apparent reality, has bravely embodied the Devil, and introduced him, now as a venerable sage, now as a friend, and again as a member of the Sanhedrin, or a high priest; or, as Bengel naïvely thinks, "Sub schemate γραμματέως, quia τὸ γέγραπται ei ter opponitur." Since Origen, an idealism, more or less free, has resolved the Temptation, either in whole or in part, into a vision, now caused by the Devil, now by God, and now by the ecstatic state of Christ's own spirit. Within our own century Schleiermacher has explained it as a misunderstood parable; Strauss, as a pure myth; De Wette, as the expansion of an historical germ; and subsequent scholars have variously combined these with each other or with the older views. If variously interpreted means well interpreted, then certainly our narrative may be said to stand here pre-eminent. But, at least, the variety indicates the strength of the desire and the determination to understand it, and of the belief that within it are truths worth knowing, and certain, when known, to increase our knowledge of Christ.

It is manifestly impossible within our present limits to discuss the many critical and exegetical problems involved in the questions just stated. Nor is it, for our present purpose, necessary to do so. Our design is to approach the subject from what may be termed the personal or biographical side, and from the standpoint thus gained make an attempt to understand the narrative.

Let us begin, then, with what ought to be a self-evident proposition. As Jesus was a moral being,

whose nature had to develop under the limitations necessary to humanity, we must conceive Him as a subject of moral probation. He could not escape exposure to its perils. "It behoved him in all things to be like unto his brethren," and so to be "in all things tempted as they are." He obeyed by choice, not by necessity; his obedience was conscious and voluntary, not instinctive and natural. It might be from the first and at every moment certain that He would achieve holiness, but could never be necessary. He could have been above the possibility of doing wrong only by being without the ability to do right. Obedience can be where disobedience may be, and nowhere else. God is too high to be tempted. He neither obeys nor disobeys, but acts wisely or righteously. We cannot say, "He is sinless," must say, "He is holy." We speak of Him in words that imply He cannot err or fall, not in words that imply He may. A brute may be provoked, but cannot be tempted. It is too low, is beneath temptation, and so we think of it as neither sinful, nor sinless, nor holy, but simply as natural—an unmoral creature. But man can be tempted, is a being capable of obedience, capable of disobedience, limited in knowledge, free in will. And Jesus as Son of Man was the true child of humanity, an universal ideal man, wanting in no quality essential to manhood. He had a free will, an intellect which grew in capacity and culture, knowledge now more, now less, imperfect. Limitation, Leibnitz notwithstanding, is no physical evil, and imperfection no moral wrong, but they involve possible error in thought and possible sin in action. Hence Jesus was, by the very terms of his being,

temptable. Where life is realized within the conditions of humanity there must be probation, and probation is only possible in a person who can be proved.

But, again, we must here conceive the temptable as the tempted. In the person and life of Jesus there was no seeming. A drama where the face within the mask is placid, where the voice is outside the soul, where the person but personates an idea, is not to be here thought of. Now, a real humanity cannot escape with a fictitious temptation. Where sin is universal, it cannot but be a greater and subtler force than were it embodied in a single being, more difficult to detect, less easy to resist. Every man becomes then, in a sense, an agent,—one in whom it has a foothold and through whom it works. Hence, Christ's struggle against sin could not but be persistent; the battle extended along the whole line of his life, and became a victory only by his death. And so, though our narrative may be termed by pre-eminence *The Temptation*, it was not simply then, but always, that Jesus was tempted. The devil left Him only "for a season;" returned personified now as Peter, now as Judas, and again as the Jews; met Him amid the solitude and agony of Gethsemane, in the clamour, mockery, and desertion of the cross. And so Milton's grand picture of the "patient Son of God" represents, not one moment, but every moment, in his glorious but perilous career:

"Infernal hosts and hellish furies round
 Environed Thee. Some howled, some yelled, some shrieked,
 Some bent at Thee their fiery darts, while Thou
 Satt'st unappall'd in calm and sinless peace."

But this very word "sinless" starts another set of questions. How could Jesus be "tempted in

all things, like as we are, yet without sin"? Is not temptation evil? Can a tempted soul be still a sinless soul? If a man becomes conscious of sin, though only to resist it, does he not lose the beautiful innocence, the white and sweet simplicity of spirit, that is, as it were, the heart of holiness? We must then consider how the tempted could be the sinless Christ. And,—

1. What is Temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to wrong. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at the man's good, making him conscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts. Abraham was tried when his faith was proved, Job when successive calamities made it manifest that he served God for nothing save the duty of the service and the glory of the Served; but Eve was tempted when persuaded to sin by the promise of becoming a god; David when, blinded and enticed by lustful desire, he plunged into the crimes that were so terribly punished and so grandly confessed and lamented. And so here emerges another distinction—in trial the issues are made fairly apparent, in temptation they are concealed. Evil in the one case is, in the other is not, disguised. The wrong seems to the tempted the desirable, and the extent to which the desirable hides the wrong measures the strength of the temptation. And so there needs

to be adaptation between means and end. What tempts one mind may only offend another. Some men are too coarse to perceive the finer forms of evil; others so refined as to be shocked by the grosser sins. Mephistopheles is one being to Faust, another to Margaret, and even to the Scholar he is inflexibly accommodating, full of changes to suit the many phases of the mind he leads. And so the tempted is the solicited to evil by evil, but by evil so disguised as to be winsome, as, if possible, to make desire victorious over conscience and will.

2. The Forms of Temptation. It may be either sensuous, imaginative, or rational, *i.e.*, a man may be tempted through the senses, the imagination, or the reason. If through the senses, then it appeals to greed, appetite, lust, or any one of the passions that bestialize man and create our grosser miseries and crimes. If through the imagination, then it dazzles to betray, comes as pride, ambition, or any one of the graceful and gracious forms that can be made to veil vain-glorious, though protean, egotism. If through the reason, then it comes as doubt of the true, suspicion of the good, or in any of the many forms in which intellect protests against the limits it so wishes, and yet is so little able, to transcend. Temptation may thus assume shapes akin to the highest as to the lowest in man, but the forms most distinct often subtly meet and blend. Perhaps it is never so powerful as when its forces approach the mind together and at once through the senses, the imagination, and the reason.

3. The Sources of Temptation. It may proceed

either (1) from self, or (2) from without self. If the first, the nature must be bad, but not of necessity radically bad; if the second, it may be innocent, but must be capable of sinning and being induced, or drawn, to a given sin. A thoroughly bad being may tempt, but cannot be tempted. The nature has become essentially evil, and so sin is natural. A sinless being may be tempted, but cannot tempt—even himself. Where inclination and will, conscience and passion, are in harmony, there can be no lust to entice or evil tendency to beset and ensnare. A being of mixed qualities and character can both tempt and be tempted, his baser can tempt his better nature, a worse creature can seduce him to deeper sin.

Now it is evident that temptation from within is a confession of sinfulness, the endeavour of depravity to become still more depraved. The self-tempted can never be the sinless. Tendencies that solicit to evil are evil tendencies. The Hunchback King, as conceived by Shakespeare and represented in the most tragic of his historical plays, is a man drunk with ambition, made by it false, perfidious, cruel. He knew that murder was a crime, eminently so where the murdered stood related to him as did the little orphans in the Tower, who seemed so beautiful and strong in their helplessness to the hired and hardened villains who saw them—

“Girdling one another

Within their innocent alabaster arms;

Their lips like four red roses on a stalk,

Which, in their summer beauty, kiss'd each other.”

But where the ruffians had pity, Richard had none. Ambition had vanquished pity and, for the time

being, seared conscience. His worse triumphed over his better nature. The temptation came from himself, and so condemned himself. The nature that produced it was bad, and its victory made the nature worse. The ability to tempt implies sinfulness, is impossible without it.

If now, the temptation comes from without, three things are possible—it may speak either (1) to still fluid evil desires, and make them crystallize into evil action; or (2) to innocence, and change it into guilt; or (3) supply it with the opportunity of rising into holiness. A word or two illustrative of these three possibilities. The Macbeth, not of history, but of the drama, may stand as an illustration of the first. He is a man full of ambition, but also

“Too full o’ the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way.”

He would be great, but guiltlessly; what he would highly, that would he holily:

“Would not play false,
And yet would wrongly win.”

And this man has a queen, with his ambition, without his scruples, strong, passionate, pitiless; and she, unsexed, filled, from crown to toe, top-full of direst cruelty, becomes the temptress, works upon her husband, now on his strength, now on his weakness, till he goes to his fatal crime and still more fatal remorse. There is evil beforehand in both, evil irresolute desires in the man, evil resolution in the woman, and the strength forces the weakness to incarnate itself in deeds conscience will not let die.

The second possibility—temptation coming to innocence and changing it into guilt—we may find

illustrated in the splendid scene in "King John," where the King says to Hubert,—

" If the midnight bell
Did, with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
Sound one into the drowsy ear of night ;
If this same were a churchyard where we stand,
And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs,"

if, indeed, Hubert could see without eyes, hear without ears, reply without a tongue, the King would, "in despite of brooded watchful day," have poured into his bosom the thoughts that filled his own. The word murder remains unspoken, but the thing is suggested. By voice and look and fawning flattering speech, the honest tender-hearted Hubert is betrayed into a promise against the life of the boy he loved. And so the tempted falls, the innocent is made the guilty.

The third possibility—innocence raised through temptation into holiness—is, perhaps, nowhere better illustrated than in the beautiful creation which, like the genius of chastity and all that is winsome in woman, has been, as it were, enshrined in "Measure for Measure," the play that so well expounds its own saying,—

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall."

Isabella, lovely as pure, most womanly in her unconscious strength, stainless among the stained, loving her doomed brother too well to sin for him, triumphs over his tears and entreaties, the wiles and threats of the Deputy, and emerges from her great temptation chaster, more beautiful in the blossom of her perfect womanhood, than she had been before.

The fierce fire refined, and what issued from it was a being purified, not simply innocent, but righteous, clothed in the invisible but impenetrable armour of sweet and conscious simplicity.

We are now in a position to consider the Temptation of Christ in relation to his sinlessness. Temptation implies (1) ability in the tempted to sin or not sin. Jesus had, to speak with the schoolmen, the "posse non peccare," not the "non posse peccare." Had He possessed the latter, He had been intemperate. (2) Evil must be presented to the tempted in a manner disguised, plausible, attractive. It was so to Jesus. When He was hungry, it was sensuous in its form; when He stood on the Temple tower, whether in body or in vision it matters not, it was imaginative; when He was offered the kingdoms of the world if He would worship Satan, it was rational. Each temptation appealed to a subjective desire or need. (3) The tempter must be sinful, the tempted may be innocent. And Christ was the tempted. The temptation came to Him, did not proceed from Him, yet performed a high and necessary function in his personal and official discipline. Whether the innocent become righteous or guilty, holy or depraved, temptation alone can reveal. The untried is a negative character, can become positive only through trial. Till every link in the chain that is to hold the vessel to its anchor be tested, you cannot be certain that it is of adequate strength. Till the bridge over which myriads are to sweep in the swift-rushing train be proved of sufficient strength, you cannot regard it as a safe pathway. So, till the will has been solicited to the

utmost to evil, its fidelity to righteousness cannot be held absolute. The way to obedience lies through suffering. The inflexible in morals is what will not bend, however immense and intense the strain. Only a Christ tempted, "yet without sin," could be the perfect Christ. What He endured proved his adequacy for his work; and out of his great trial He emerged, not simply sinless, which He had been before, but righteous,—that most beautiful of objects to the Divine eye and most winsome of beings to the human heart, a perfect man, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Our discussion conducts, then, to but one conclusion: temptation was not only possible to the sinlessness, but necessary to the holiness, of Christ. Yet this conclusion is but an introduction, only clears the way for the study of what we term the Temptation. And here we may remark that the place where it happened is not without significance. Into what wilderness Jesus was led to be tempted we do not know—whether the wild and lonely solitudes watched by the mountains where Moses and Elijah struggled in prayer and conquered in faith, or the steep rock by the side of the Jordan overlooking the Dead Sea, which later tradition has made the arena of this fell conflict. Enough, the place was a desert, waste, barren, shelterless, overhead the hot sun, underfoot the burning sand or blistering rock. No outbranching trees made a cool restful shade; no spring upbursting with a song of gladness came to relieve the thirst; no flowers bloomed, pleasing the eye with colour and the nostril with fragrance: all

was drear desert. Now, two things may be here noted—the desolation, and the solitude. The heart that loves Nature is strangely open to her influences. The poet sees a glory in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, which exalts and soothes him; but a land of waste and cheerless gloom casts over his spirit a shadow as of the blackness of darkness. And Jesus had the finest, most sensitive, soul that ever looked through human eyes. He loved this beautiful world, loved the stars that globed themselves in the heaven above, the flowers that bloomed in beauty on the earth beneath, the light and shade that played upon the face of Nature, now brightening it as with the smile of God, now saddening it as with the pity that gleams through a cloud of tears. Think, then, how the desolation must have deepened the shadows on his spirit, increased the burden that made Him almost faint at the opening of his way. And He was in solitude—alone there, without the comfort of a human presence, the fellowship of a kindred soul. Yet the loneliness was a sublime necessity. In his supreme moments society was impossible to Him. The atmosphere that surrounded the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Agony, and the Cross, He alone could breathe; in it human sympathy slept or died, and human speech could make no sound. Out of loneliness He issued to begin his work; into loneliness He passed to end it. The moments that made his work divinest were his own and his Father's.

But much more significant than the scene of the Temptation is the place where it stands in the history of the deed and mind of Jesus. It stands just

after the Baptism, and before the Ministry ; just after the long silence, and before the brief yet eternal speech ; just after the years of privacy, and before the few but glorious months of publicity. Now, consider what this means. The Baptism had made Him manifest as the Messiah. In the Baptist emotions inexpressible had been awakened. His new-born hopes made him a new man, lifted him into the splendid humility which rejoiced to be, like the morning star, quenched in the light of the risen Sun. But John was here a pale reflection of Jesus. The one's emotions were to the other's as "moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." We must not imagine that every day was the same to Christ, or Christ the same on every day. He had his great moments, as we have. We may call the supreme moment when the soul awakens to God, and the man realizes manhood, conversion, the new birth, or what we please. What the experience we so name signifies to us, the moment symbolized by the Baptism signified to Jesus, only with a difference in degree which his pre-eminence alone can measure. It marked his awakening to all that was involved in Messiahship ; and such an awakening could not come without utmost tumult of spirit—tumult that only the solitude and struggle of the wilderness could calm. The outward expresses the inward change. Before this moment no miracle ; after it the miracles begin and go on multiplying, Before it no speech, no claim of extraordinary mission, only divine and golden silence ; after it the teaching with authority, the founding of the kingdom, the creating of the world's light. Before it the Carpenter of Nazareth,

the son of Joseph and Mary, doing, in beautiful meekness, the common duties of the common day; after it the Christ of God, the Revealer of the Father, the Life and the Light of men. Now, He who became so different to others had first become as different to Himself. What was soon to be revealed to the world was then made manifest to his own soul. And the revelation was dazzling enough to blind, was so brilliant as to need a solitude where the senses, undistracted by society, could be adjusted to the new light and perceive all it unveiled. And so the Spirit, which in that glorious hour possessed Him, drove Him into the wilderness to essay his strength and realize the perfect manhood that was perfect Messiahship.

We must, then, study the Temptation through the consciousness of Jesus. Only by the one can the true significance of the other be revealed. The mind that can for forty days be its own supreme society is a mind full of fellest conflicts. We have seen how much the Baptism signified for Christ, how for Him it had ended an old and inaugurated a new life. Now, observe, in our greatest and most decisive times the Divine and the devilish lie very near each other; supernal and infernal courses both seem so possible as to be almost equal. And the two appear to have been for the moment strangely mingled in the consciousness of Christ. Matthew says "he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil;" and Mark, "immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." He was, therefore, the subject at once of Divine possession and demoniac temptation. And the two

were in a manner related, the one involved the other : the first could become perfect only by the defeat of the second. To Him the great moral alternatives came as they had never come to any one before, as they can never come again. The forty days were not all days of temptation—were days of ecstasy and exaltation as well. Sunshine and cloud, light and darkness, fought their eternal battle in and round this soul. When the battle ended, the sunshine and light were found victorious ; the cloud and the darkness had to leave the field broken, vanquished, for evermore.

The Temptation and the assumption by Jesus of the Messianic character and office are thus essentially related. The one supplies the other with the condition and occasion of its existence. The office is assailed in and through the person. These, indeed, blend in Jesus. Had He ceased to be the person He was, He had ceased to be the Messiah. Had He not been Jesus, He could not have been the Christ. Hence, had the person been ruined, the office must have perished ; or had the office been depraved, the person must have failed in character and in work. The temptations aim at a common end, but by different means, appeal now to Jesus, and, again, to the Christ. When He was driven into the wilderness three points must have stood out from the tumult of thought and feeling pre-eminent. (1) The relation of the supernatural to the natural in Himself ; or, on the other side, his relation to God as his ideal human Son. (2) The relation of God to the supernatural in his person, and the official in his mission ; and (3) the nature of the

kingdom He had come to found, and the agencies by which it was to live and extend. And these precisely were the issues that emerged in the several temptations. They thus stood rooted in the then consciousness of Christ and related in the most essential way to his spirit. How, and to what extent, a word or two of exposition may make more apparent.

1. The First Temptation. Though in form sensuous, it is in essence moral or spiritual. Observe the language is hypothetical, "*If* thou art the Son of God," and is subtly meant to express real but removable doubt in the mind of the tempter and to insinuate doubt into the mind of the tempted. It says, as it were, on the one side, "You may, or may not, be the Son of God; I cannot tell. Yet I am open to conviction; convince me;" and suggests, on the other, "Your consciousness of Messiahship may be illusive; you may be the victim of the Baptist's enthusiasm and your own imagination; clearly your belief in yourself and your mission is, without some higher warrant, unwarranted." Then the answer to the double doubt was so possible, simple, conclusive, "Command these stones to be made bread!" The temptation was great; had Christ lost faith in Himself, Christianity had never been. It was reasonable, too. Israel had been divinely fed while divinely led. What had been right to the people, need not be wrong to the Son, of God. And where supernatural power was supposed to exist, could it be wrong to test its reality in an act so holy and excellent as the preservation of an imperilled life? But the temptation, though formidable, was vic-

toriously resisted. Christ did not take his life into his own hands; left it in the hands of God.

Now, what constituted this a temptation—where lay its evil? Suppose Christ had commanded the stones to become bread, what then? To Christ, considering the work He had to do, two things were necessary. He had to live his personal life (1) within the limits necessary to man, and (2) in perfect dependence on God. Had He transgressed either of these conditions He had ceased to be man's ideal Brother or God's ideal Son. Man cannot create; he lives by obeying Nature. He has to plough, to sow, to reap, to garner and winnow, to bruise and bake his grain, that he may eat and live. Now, had Christ by a direct miracle fed Himself, He had lifted Himself out of the circle and system of humanity, had annulled the very terms of the nature which made Him one with man. While his supernatural power was his own, it existed not for Himself, but for us. The moment He had stooped to save self He had become disqualified to save men. And He could as little cease to depend on God as to obey Nature. The ideal human life must be perfect in its dependence on God, absolute in its obedience. The ideal Son could not act as if He had no Father. And so his choice was not to be his own Providence, but to leave Himself to the Divine. He conquered by faith, and his first victory was like his last. The taunts He had to hear and bear on the cross—"He saved others, himself he cannot save;" "He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him"—were but a repetition of this earlier temptation; and then, as now, though the agony was

deeper and the darkness more dense, He triumphed by giving Himself into the hands of the Father.

2. The Second Temptation.¹ Here, as before, the opening clause is hypothetical, and suggestive of the same double doubt; but it is proposed to remove it by an exactly opposite act. The first temptation required a miracle of independence; the second requires one of dependence. While that was sensuous, this is imaginative in its form. An act of absolute self-sufficiency was suggested through a subjective need and capacity; an act of absolute faith is suggested through the sublimity of an objective relation and effect. What could better exalt into a divine and fearless ecstasy an imaginative soul, loving God too well to distrust Him, than the thought of a trust so boundless as to believe that the impalpable and yielding air would be made by his hands as safe as the solid earth? or what could better lift into dauntless enthusiasm a mind anxious to regenerate sense-bound men than the vision of a descent into the crowd in the visible arms of Heaven, the manifest supernatural Messenger of the merciful God? The temptation was, on the one side, powerful to a spirit full of generous trust in God; and, on the other, no less powerful to a spirit full of generous designs for man. And it came, too, clothed in the garb of a Divine oracle—
“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.”

Now what was the evil in this suggested act? It

¹ For reasons that cannot be here stated the order of Matthew is followed, rather than Luke's.

was twofold, evil alike on the Godward and on the manward side. In the first aspect it meant that God should be forced to do for Him what He had before refused to do for Himself—make Him an object of supernatural care, exempted from obedience to natural law, a child of miracle, exceptional in his very physical relations to God and Nature. In the second aspect it meant that He was to be a Son of Wonder, clothed in marvels, living a life that struck the senses and dazzled the fancies of the poor vulgar crowd. In the one case it had been fatal to Himself, in the other to his mission. Had He been the Child of a visible Providence, which suspended for his sake every natural and human law, then He had ceased to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, had never been made perfect through suffering, and so had never become, as “a merciful and faithful High Priest,” a sublime object of faith and source of peace. Had He been encircled with wonders, heralded by marvels, then He had led men by sense, not by conscience and reason, had reached them through their lowest and most vulgar, not through their highest and noblest, qualities; and so they could have owed to Him no birth from above, no real spiritual change. Special as were his relations to God He did not presume on these, but, with divine self-command, lived, though the supernatural Son, like the natural Child of the Eternal Father. His human life was as real as it was ideal; the Divine did not supersede the human, nor seek to transcend its limits, physical and spiritual. And his fidelity to our nature has been its most pre-eminent blessing. No man who knows the

Spirit of Christ will presume either on the Providence or the mercy of God, because certain that these remain, even in their highest achievements, the dutiful servants of Divine Wisdom and Righteousness. He who came to shew us the Father shewed Him not as a visible Guardian, not as an arbitrary mechanical Providence, but as an invisible Presence about our spirits, about our ways, source of our holiest thoughts, our tenderest feelings, our wisest actions. The Only-Begotten lived as one of many brethren, though as the only one conscious of his Sonship. And, perhaps, his self-sacrifice reached here its sublimest point. He would not, and He did not, tempt the Lord his God, but lived his beautiful and perfect life within the terms of the human, yet penetrated and possessed by the Divine.

3. The Third Temptation. Here the temptation seems eminently gross. Yet devil-worship can assume many forms, and some of these may be most refined. Worship is homage, and homage to a person, real or supposed, representative of certain principles, modes of action, and aims. What it here means seems evident enough. Jesus is recognized as seeking a kingdom, as intending, indeed, to found one. His aims are confessed to be more than Jewish, not national, but universal, not an extension of Israel, but a comprehension of the world. It is known that his purpose is to be the Messiah, not of the Jews, but of man. The only question is as to the nature of his kingdom and kingdom. The kingdom here offered is one not of the spirit, but "of the world." And "world"

here means not what it may be to the good, but what it is to the bad. It and its kingdoms may be won at once, will be, if Jesus worships the devil, *i.e.*, makes evil his good, uses unholy means to accomplish his ends. It is as if the tempter had said, "Survey the world, and mark what succeeds. Away there in Italy lives and rules the Emperor of the world, a selfish sensual man, whose right is might. Over there in Cæsarea sits his red-handed, yet vacillating, Procurator. In your own Galilee a treacherous and lustful Herod reigns, its deputy lord. Up in Jersusalem are priests and scribes, great in things external, the fierce fanatics of formalism. Everywhere unholy men rule, unholy means prevail. Worldliness holds the world in fee. By it alone can you conquer. Use the means and the men of Cæsar, and your success will be swift and sure. Worship me, and the kingdoms of the world are thine."

The Temptation was subtly adapted to the mood and the moment, and was as evil as subtle. Bad means make bad ends. Good ends do not justify evil means; evil means deprave good ends. So a Messianic kingdom, instituted and established by worldliness, had been a worldly kingdom, no better than the coarse and sensuous Empire of Rome. And Jesus, while He felt the force, saw the evil of the temptation, and vanquished it by the truth on which his own spiritual and eternal city was to be founded, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The three Temptations are thus as essentially related to each other as to the spirit of Jesus.

They are attempts to ruin the kingdom, the first through its King, the second through its God, the third through its means and agents. They are the successive scenes, or acts, of one great drama, where the actors are spiritual, the struggles and triumphs the same. And yet they describe a contest representative and universal. Jesus is here the representative Man, the source and head of the new humanity, the founder of the kingdom that is to be. When He triumphs, it triumphs. When He is victorious, all are victorious that live in and by Him. And his victory, as it was for humanity, was by humanity. The supernatural energies that were in Him He did not use for Himself. In our nature, as in our name, He stood, fought, conquered. How perfectly, then, is He qualified to be at once our Saviour and example! The heart that loves us is a heart that was once strained in a great battle, where the pain was its own and the victory ours. To Him, as He lives and reigns in love and might, we can come in sin and weakness, in joy and sorrow, certain that, as He "suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

II. SAMUEL

AND THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.

It was the singular good fortune of Samuel to be the founder both of the monarchy in Israel and also of the Prophetic order. Both had existed in embryo in the institutions of Moses; but now, out of the