

the white flour that looks well, than for the coarse wheat which is far more nutritive and far more palatable. When the last treasures are discovered; when we have brought fashion and nature together;

Then, like the Sun, let bounty spread her ray,
And shine that superfluity away.

ARTICLE VIII.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

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In attempting to explain the transaction recorded in Matthew 4: 1—11, Mark 1: 12, 13, and Luke 4: 1—15, we do not forget that the subject is mysterious, and should be approached with awe. It comprehends a deep spiritual philosophy. Its interpretation is beset with difficulties. We have never met with any satisfactory commentary upon it. Nor shall we be disappointed if our own explanation should fail of commending itself to all. The subject, however, is exceedingly important, and invites study. If we are able to make even a small contribution towards a proper understanding of it, we shall not feel that we have labored in vain.

1. The circumstances under which the temptation occurred. It took place at the commencement of our Lord's ministry. In the history of his experience, it followed a season of high spiritual exaltation. He had just received baptism; the heavens had been opened unto him; the Spirit had descended upon him; the Father had said, in a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and, according to Luke, he was at that time full of the Holy Ghost. These are the circumstances, and such was the state of mind, under which he was conducted to the scene of temptation.

2. The *time* occupied with this event. It is commonly spoken of as forty days and forty nights. But the record shows that

forty days and forty nights elapsed since he was led up into the wilderness, before the three special temptations here mentioned, commenced. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights," says Matthew, "he was *afterward* an hungered." Luke is equally explicit. He says, that when the forty days and forty nights "were *ended*, he *afterward* hungered." We have no means of exactly limiting the time. The three temptations may have occurred on the fortieth day, or the first on that day, and the second and third at intervals of some days after. Nor are these three temptations the only ones to which our Lord was subjected. As he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, the natural inference is, that the whole forty days was a scene of conflict. Accordingly Marks says, that he was "in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan;" and Luke says, that he was forty days tempted of the devil, after which time the three great master-plots were brought to bear upon him. Nor is there anything in the record to indicate that the *first* of these *three* temptations was the first of all the temptations to which our Saviour had been subjected. Matthew indeed, says, after his fast of forty days, and his hunger had become extreme: "And when the tempter *came* to him." This does not imply that he had never come before. He might have approached him often. But now, in new circumstances, and much more than ever exposed to danger, a new onset from the adversary, as might be expected, was realized. Our conclusion, therefore, is, that, during the whole forty days, he was more or less of the time subject to those temptations which found their culminating points at the end of the time specified, or to other temptations not here mentioned.

3. The nature of the *fasting*. The fast of forty days may have been more or less rigid. Fasting implies sometimes partial, and sometimes total, abstinence. When Luke says, that "in those days he did eat nothing," he may mean that he had no regular supplies, that he subsisted only on the roots and wild fruits which he found in the desert. So Daniel says of himself, that he was "mourning three full weeks, that he ate no pleasant bread neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth." But whether this fast was more or less rigid, doubtless the Saviour suffered greatly from it; and, at the end of the time, the severest knowings of hunger come upon him.

4. The *scene* of the temptation. The scene of the temptation was the wilderness. What wilderness the Scripture refers to,

we have no means of determining. Probably it was one of those wild, uninhabited places which abounded near the Jordan. It is sufficient for our purpose, that the place was a desert, a solitude, howling with wild beasts, and so a fit place for dejection of mind, and the attacks of the adversary.

5. But how *came* Jesus into this place of temptation? Matthew says, that he was led up by the Spirit (*ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος*). Mark says, the Spirit driveth him (*τὸ Πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει*); and Luke again, that he was led by the Spirit (*ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι*). What Spirit do the sacred writers mean? Certainly, the Holy Spirit. For the record says, that, being full of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit (*Πνεύματος ἁγίου*), he was led by the Spirit (*Πνεύματος*), that is, the same Spirit with which he was filled. The words of Luke, *αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει*, the Spirit driveth him, mean nothing more than that he was borne away by the powerful urgency of the Spirit within him. The *Πνεῦμα* here is not the evil Spirit, for the word never refers in Scripture to the evil Spirit, unless when connected with some qualifying word to indicate it. Nor need we be stumbled at the idea that the Spirit of God should lead the Son of God into temptation. Christ came expressly to destroy the works of the devil. Under the tempter and arch enemy of man, the first Adam had fallen and ruined us all; the second Adam must contend with and overcome the same, or human recovery would be impossible. Christ, the captain of our salvation, must be made perfect through suffering, must be able to succor the tempted through experience of temptation, must bruise the serpent's head. It was, then, a part of God's plan, that his Son should come into conflict with the prince of evil, and get the mastery of him. He must, therefore, be exposed to his temptations, and to his temptations in the severest forms.

6. But how is it possible that a perfectly holy being should be tempted? The question is readily answered, when we understand the meaning of the word *πειράζω*, from which *πειρασθῆναι* and *πειραζόμενος* are derived, signifying *to make trial of, to try*. God tempted or tried Abraham; wicked men tempt or try God; they are also tempted or tried by their own lusts; in other words, men are placed under powerful inducements to do evil, as they sometimes place God under powerful inducements to punish them. Christ was led into the wilderness that he might feel the full influence of the most powerful inducements to do wrong,

and, as our example and Saviour, resist them, maintain his integrity and manifest his incorruptible virtue. It is, indeed, said, that God tempteth no man; that is, he never lays before men motives to evil that he may lead them into sin, while he *does* place them in circumstances of affliction, trial and inducement to wrong, that, by opportunities of overcoming evil, they may manifest their loyalty to him and be confirmed in it.

Now, with this idea of temptation, we have only to remember that our Saviour, though Divine, was perfectly human; that he had human feelings, appetites and susceptibilities, and we shall see that temptation is possible even to a sinless nature. Suppose a holy human being famishing with hunger; suppose that his sufferings are so great, as has sometimes been the case with starving persons, that he is ready to tear the flesh from his own body. Now place before him a table loaded with food. His desire for it is unavoidable and inexpressible. But God says, touch it not. Nature insists on snatching a loaf. But duty says, No. Here are the most imperious appetites, the most powerful inducements. But it is possible to conceive of a person who says, No; I'll suffer, I'll starve, I'll die, but I will not disobey God. The inclination to *eat* is almost irresistible, but there is not the *slightest disposition to disobey* God. Reason sits upon its throne and exercises its power of choice. The mind is made up at once, decidedly, unwaveringly, and once for all. The urgency of nature to eat is almost infinite. But the true man within the man says, No! He says it instantly, he says it cheerfully, without the least murmur or disposition to murmur. While it is almost naturally impossible to refrain, it is really morally impossible to eat, under the circumstances supposed. We may say, therefore, of our Saviour, that, as a man, in case of extreme hunger, he must desire food, and, as a free agent, power to gratify forbidden desires, but, as a holy being, who prefers death to evil, he cannot do this wickedness and sin against God. There are also mental as well as physical susceptibilities which belong to human nature as such. And it is conceivable that a person might have strong *natural* desires for some forbidden object or attainment, beyond and above the province of mere animal appetite, and that the indulgence or immediate denial of these desires should make the difference in a given instance between sin and holiness. If this be true, a holy being, independent of bodily organization, might be subjected to temptation.

7. By what *agency* was Jesus tempted? ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, says Matthew; ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, says Mark; ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, says Luke. This is not the place to discuss the question of the existence of evil spirits. But a few words on the subject seem necessary. No man can deny that God has created other orders of rational beings besides men; or that some of those orders have fallen; or that a purely spiritual being can have influence over human minds. The New Testament teaches the existence of angels and devils. It teaches this almost as plainly as it teaches the existence of God. It would require nearly as much violence to language, if we should interpret the Scriptures so as to exclude from them the recognition of good and evil spirits, as it would to exclude the recognition of God. Man, in his original state, and in his true nature, before the apostasy, is never represented as originally evil; it comes to him first from without. There is an outward force which holds sway over humanity, and which must be destroyed. Man fell being tempted by the serpent, elsewhere called, that old serpent, the devil. The first prediction concerning the Messiah is, that he, the seed of the woman, should bruise the serpent's head. When Christ came, he recognized the existence of devils, and assumed to cast them out. He spoke of an individual as their leader, whom he called *the devil*, and the prince of this world; and of his associates, as the angels of the devil, as devils, and the powers of darkness.

This *individual*, a mighty, mysterious, fallen intelligence, not, however, omniscient nor omnipotent, the head of a great organized opposition to God, the arch foe of man and the prince of evil, is *the agent* by whom Jesus is tempted. Some, indeed, have supposed the occurrences under consideration to be a mere representation of a conflict on the part of Christ with impersonal evil. But there is hardly more reason for supposing that what is here called the devil is impersonal, than to suppose that what is here called Jesus is impersonal. The principle of interpretation which would remove the evil agent, as an agent, from the record, would remove our Saviour himself from the record, as an agent. The only thing which can be distorted, on exegetical grounds, into an argument for supposing that the temptation is anything other than a narrative of facts, is the use of the preposition ἐν by Luke before τῷ Πνεύματι, which might allow us to say that Jesus was led *in* the Spirit, instead of saying, as one translation does, that he was led by the Spirit. But that this

preposition often signifies *by*, no one acquainted with the New Testament Greek will deny. Matthew and Mark, moreover, use the preposition *ὑπό* instead of *ἐν*, and *ὑπό* never signifies *in*, but *under, through* and *by*, either of which definitions would require the sense given in our translation. Besides, the same passage which says that he was led up by (*ὑπό*) the Spirit, says that he was tempted by (*ὑπό*) the devil. If we should say he was led up *in* the Spirit, then, to be consistent, we must say that he was led up *in* the devil.

The whole of Farmer's argument (with the exception just considered), that the temptation is a vision, bases itself on mere aesthetic grounds, which a proper explanation of the passage removes. To the idea, then, that the narrative is a vision, myth, parable, representation, we have only to say that there is no evidence of it whatever. On exegetical grounds, we can no more explain away the reality of the temptation than we can explain away the reality of the Saviour's baptism, his agony in the garden, or even his crucifixion.

8. General explanation. As the *narrative*, taken literally, is supposed by some to involve absurdities and suppositions shocking to the feelings, and dishonorable to Christ,¹ we must now proceed to the explanation of it. The main objections to the most literal interpretation, then, are the bodily presence of the tempter, and the Saviour suffering himself to be thus taken from place to place by him, when he knew who this being was, and knew his object. But what reason is there for supposing a bodily presence? The prince of evil is a spirit; if he comes in his true nature, he comes as a spirit. Besides, Christ was tempted in all respects as we are, and we are not tempted by Satan in his bodily presence but by his evil suggestions. It does not appear that he ever presented himself in human form on any other occasion, why should he have departed from his custom, in the Saviour's case? Moreover, his hope of success must have depended upon his concealing his true character.

But, supposing only a spiritual presence, it is said the Saviour must have known, at once, both the tempter and his designs, and have refused all converse with him. But this proceeds on the

¹ Such as that Christ was led about from place to place by Satan in bodily form, followed Satan wherever the prince of evil was disposed to go with him, and, without resistance, was even carried through the air and placed on the top of the temple by him.

supposition that Jesus, as a man, knew all things, a sentiment which the Scripture expressly contradicts. He was once an infant and had only an intelligence. He grew in knowledge as he grew in stature; and in full maturity, he said of one event, of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the Son. That he was Divine as well as human, and that, when he called his Divine nature into exercise, he was omniscient by the power of it, no orthodox Christian will deny. But that he was also human, and that as such his faculties were subject to human limitations, every reader of the New Testament confesses. Speaking of him as Divine, no doubt God dwelt in him, and was one with him; but speaking of him as human, it is equally true that there were times when he confessed his weakness, and the imperfection of his knowledge. Is it necessary to suppose, that he enjoyed the full consciousness of his Deity and had all his Divine attributes in exercise, during a series of temptations by which God was fitting him to succor the tempted? We shall the more readily answer this question, if we consider what occurred towards the close of his ministry. During the crucifixion, he was bereft for a time of *all consciousness of God's presence*, and in this state of mind was subjected, there is reason to believe, anew to temptation. Luke says, at the close of the scene in the wilderness, that the devil departed from him *for a season*, plainly indicating that his attacks would be renewed at some future period. Christ said to his disciples, on the night of betrayal, the prince of this world cometh and has nothing in me. A few hours afterward, and after the agony in the garden, he says to the officers who came to arrest him, now is your hour and the power of darkness; and Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, says, that, when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears, he was heard in that he feared. Putting these things together, it is manifest that our Saviour was subjected to a temptation at the *close* of his ministry, addressed to his fears, and, from the fact that he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," we infer that during the struggle he was unsustained by any conscious presence of his Deity. The natural inference, therefore, is, that, in the temptations which took place at the commencement of his ministry, he acted only in his human nature, without the knowledge or the power which belonged to his Divine nature, and without other supports than those which a human being derives from God.

Now, then, calling to mind that he was tempted in all respects as we are, and so not by the bodily presence, but by the suggestions of the tempter, and keeping in view the other fact just stated, viz. the limitation of his knowledge when acting only as a man, we infer that as it is with us, so it must have been with him, viz. that the suggestions of the adversary, so long as they were *innocent*, could not be distinguished from his own innocent thoughts, and that the presence of the tempter could be known only by his temptations to evil. As we have seen before, there was time enough after the termination of the forty days, to have visited a high mountain or have returned to Jerusalem, before the entire conflict was ended. We suppose the temptation, then, to have occurred after this manner. At the end of forty days, the tempter, not corporially but mentally present, suggests the idea of turning stones into bread. This being contrary to one of our Saviour's fundamental principles of action, which was, never to use miraculous powers for his own relief, and implying distrust in God and the presumptuous taking of matters into his own hands, was immediately recognized as a temptation, and immediately repelled. The next attempt consists of two parts, going to Jerusalem, to the pinnacle of the temple, and the proposition to cast himself down. The first part, by itself considered, would be innocent, and the inducement to it might not be recognized as coming from the tempter. There might have been important reasons in the Saviour's mind, why he should go to Jerusalem and ascend to the top of the temple. And the presentation of those reasons, though *really* pressed upon him from without, may not have been distinguished from his own thoughts, and so have been innocently complied with. But when the idea of throwing himself down, to astonish and convince the multitude by such a daring feat, relying on the Scripture that the angels should bear him up, was suggested, the Saviour knew, in an instant, that this proposition, involving an unbidden act of the highest presumption, and the indulgence of unhallowed pride and vanity, was from the evil one, and he instantly repelled it. So in the last case, there could be no sin in ascending a mountain, whether in the desert, or having left the desert, somewhere near Jerusalem. The most cogent reasons of a good kind may have occurred to him, nor was there anything wrong in looking round on the kingdoms of the world. But the suggestion came to accept dominion of them at the hands of Satan. The blas-

phemous suggestion indicates the source from which it came, and is repelled with scorn, and an indignant "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Olshausen, whose commentary on this subject is generally able and judicious, supposes that the Saviour, instead of actually visiting Jerusalem and ascending the mountain, went through with this part of the transaction only in mind; that he went to Jerusalem and upon the pinnacle of the temple, and went up the mountain and saw the kingdoms, only in imagination. But if we admit the whole of this idea, we may about as well admit that the whole temptation took place only in imagination, or, as Farmer and others assert, that it was merely a vision, both which suppositions Olshausen himself rejects as untenable.

The only remaining difficulty which needs to be explained, is contained in the declaration, that Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time. According to the free manner in which the word *all* is used in Scripture, we need not suppose that the Saviour had a view of *every* kingdom on earth, or even of the major part of the kingdoms. It is said that all Judea, and all Jerusalem, and all the country round about Jordan went to John's baptism. The meaning obviously is, that vast multitudes went, though perhaps not a fifth part of *all* the inhabitants. We understand, then, by the words under consideration, that the Saviour had an instantaneous view of the leading kingdoms of the earth. These may naturally have come before him as the vivid conceptions of a mind highly excited by the circumstances in which it was placed, and the influences which were upon it. The laws of Scripture language would be fulfilled, we think, by this supposition, though, as already shown, the idea of going to Jerusalem and up the mountain, only in mind, would require violence done to the text. For us to say that we went to Boston and to the top of the State-house, or that we went to the top of the White Mountains, would be to imply, if we gave no notice to the contrary, that we did these acts literally. But if we should say, that, standing alone on the top of a mountain, and pressed with most trying thoughts, we saw all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, we should expect people to understand that we saw them as vivid conceptions. We suppose, then, that the Saviour saw these kingdoms, as vivid mental conceptions, so vivid, perhaps, as to become almost momentary illusions, and that the

tempter made use of these conceptions, to accomplish his infernal purposes.

9. The adaptation of these temptations to their object. That they were real, and that they were powerful, there can be no question. Think of a starving man able to satisfy his hunger by an act, *wrong* indeed, but by an act which has an innocent appearance, and for which he might readily excuse himself under the circumstances. How strong the inducement! what a nice sense of right and wrong, what wonderful conscientiousness, what decided virtue, what noble self-denial, does resistance imply! Think, again, of the position of the Saviour in reference to his countrymen. He was a different character from what the Jews had expected in the Messiah; he was of humble origin, a stranger, with no splendid claims on their notice. He would have to encounter their prejudices; the chances were more than a hundred to one that he would be rejected. Now, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, and looking down along the deep precipice on the edge of which the temple stood, he appears, in the presence of the people, at the height of between three and four hundred feet above the ground. Cast thyself down headlong, no injury will follow, the Scriptures encourage the act, promising that the angels shall bear thee up; the multitudes thronging round the temple will witness the astounding feat, and hail thee with shoutings and raptures as Messiah and King. The choice is thus offered him between a magnificent reception by his countrymen and a life of glorious royalty on the one hand, or contempt and rejection on the other. If we cannot fully sympathize with the trials of this temptation, it is only because we cannot enter into the circumstances. We forget that Christ was completely human. In the last temptation, it was made apparent to the Saviour that he could become prince of the world on the same conditions, on which many of the greatest potentates had received their power, viz. by a disregard to what is right, by casting off allegiance to God; or, what is the same thing, by bowing down to Satan. Alexander, Caesar, Tamerlane, Napoleon, so far as men can judge, obtained supremacy in this way. Instigated by ambition, they fought their way to the heights of worldly power and fame. They acted for self-aggrandizement and not for the glory of God, under the influence and patronage of the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, which ever worketh in the children of disobedience. To a mind

which had the least innate corruption, the least worldly ambition, this would have been a powerful temptation, probably an irresistible one. The aspirant for fame would not need, perhaps, to recognize the supremacy of Satan, in so many words or in forms. Only let him cast off the fear of God, and learn to call evil good under the blinding influence of specious pretences, and he becomes, of course, a high subject of man's arch tempter. Such a temptation, though like the others it found nothing in Christ corresponding to it, no inward corruption on which its fires could kindle, was the most powerful temptation which that peerless spirit of darkness could invent.

10. The representative character of these temptations. They represent three great classes of temptations by which mankind are apt to be assailed. The first is addressed to the physical appetites. It is an appeal to the susceptibilities and infirmities of sense. He who could maintain his integrity, under such circumstances as those in which Jesus was placed, must be considered as a man of impregnable virtue as respects his whole animal nature. The second is addressed to a love of admiration and applause, which is natural to men. Nothing is sweeter to the mass of mankind than that incense of praise which follows great achievements. Here, in this third department of human abilities, was Jesus vigorously assailed. Coming off victorious, he shows himself forever incapable of seduction, by any possible offer, from this source. The third was addressed to a mental susceptibility, nearly, if not quite, universal among men, the love of power and possession. He who could resist the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and all the splendors attending supremacy over them, must be acknowledged superior to every possible allurements of wealth, glory and power. Nor can any temptation be conceived of, under which a person would be likely to fall, who had triumphantly overcome the three in question. In the victory thus obtained, man has a captain of salvation, a perfect example of moral heroism, in maintaining allegiance to the right.

11. The manner in which Christ resisted the devil commends itself to imitation. He did it instantly, decidedly, and by the word of God. He did not suffer himself to be deceived by the specious arguments of the adversary, not even by quotations from the Scriptures. But having a clear sense of right, and a firm will, answering Scripture, wrongly applied, by plain affirma-

tions of truth, he triumphed for himself and for mankind. As humanity fell with the first Adam, under the power of the tempter, so was the way prepared for it to rise again through the victories of the second Adam in the wilderness. Whoever believes in Christ, and would resolutely follow him, in a course of instantaneous, decided resistance to evil, might soon rise, through grace, to an almost superhuman dignity, in the scale of being.

12. The rewards of temptation vanquished. "Then the angels came and ministered unto him." Full of blissful thoughts, and encouraged by these beauteous spirits, Christ went forth to toil and suffering, having the peace of God within him and his glory round about him. Let men also resist evil, fleeing to Christ for succor in the hour of temptation, and angels, who still minister unto the heirs of salvation, will come to them, and the joy of Jesus will fill their hearts.

13. A single remark on the discrepancy in the order of these temptations, as recorded by the evangelists, will finish what we designed to say on the subject. According to Matthew, the second temptation is that whose scene of action is the pinnacle of the temple, while the third has reference to the kingdoms of the world. In Luke, the order is reversed. Matthew, by the use of the particle *τότε*, with which he introduces the fifth verse, and *πάλιν*, which stands at the beginning of the eighth, shows clearly that he intends to designate the exact order in which the several events occurred, while the general and free manner employed by the other evangelists shows with equal clearness, that he meant simply to present the facts without regard to the order of occurrences.