

ARTICLE III.

TEMPTATION NO EXCUSE FOR TRANSGRESSION.

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To TEMPT is, primarily and most comprehensively, to hold to or press toward a specific result. More commonly it applies in a bad sense, as urging to an evil result. But an examination of the particular case can alone determine the character of the issue intended.

Sometimes it is used as opening an intended occasion for eminently virtuous action, while the severity of the self-denial requisite opens also a dangerous liability to disobedience. In such cases it proves a test and trial of character, training and disciplining the disposition. The master may mean it for good, while the disciple must decide on his own responsibility whether the occasion shall not be perverted for evil. In such sense "God did tempt Abraham," in commanding the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. xxii. 1). Such, also, is the meaning of the apostle James, when he says: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience" (James i. 2, 3); and of the apostle Peter, in writing to "such as are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, honor, and glory" (1 Peter i. 6, 7). So parental and tutorial discipline is administered strictly and often severely for virtue's sake, but when wisely tempered to condition and capacity the needed trial can be no excuse for any delinquency and perversion. When the training is selfish and malignant, exacting what is cruel and unjust, it becomes tyranny and oppression, and has itself no excuse for its exactions. Yet, even then, when deliverance cannot

righteously be found, patient endurance of the persecution and martyrdom has its compensations, purifying the character and dignifying the disposition. The magnanimity which persists in its integrity while patiently enduring its imposed sufferings has within itself its own reward. Even the cruelty of the persecution cannot excuse an apostasy from truth and righteousness. The approbation of conscience and of God is more than deliverance by wrong action.

At other times the trial may be made to assume quite another form, and give an entirely new meaning to the temptation, as when the subject of the discipline turns back and puts the master himself to the proof. This may be done in various ways — by fretful complaints of his dealings, rash tests of his truth, or insolent arraignment of his faithfulness, and by covert attempts to expose him to the charge of self-contradiction and duplicity or absurdity. In either of these ways the trial is in the bad sense of temptation from the inferior to the superior. So, in the first way, Israel often provoked God, “in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works” (Ps. xcv. 8, 9). A marked case was that in the thirsty desert, — the chiding with Moses, and insolently demanding water as the test of God’s faithfulness, saying: “Is the Lord among us or not” (Ex. xvii. 7); and which induced the standing commandment: “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah” (Deut. vi. 16). The second mode was Satan’s tempting Jesus Christ rashly to tempt God by presumptuously testing God’s faithfulness to save him while he should cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. iv. 7). The third mode was that of the Pharisees, who came to Christ that they might “entangle him in his talk,” and asked: “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?” — and which he effectually rebuked, by replying: “Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money” (Matt. xxii. 15–22).

There is a reasonable and reverent way of testing God’s truth and faithfulness, which he permits and encourages,

sanctioning the trial by substantiating the proof. He allowed Abraham's appeal, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25). He himself appealed to the conscious convictions of his people: "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal?" (Ezek. xviii. 29); and also answered Elijah's appeal by fire in the trial between him and the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 21); and he himself propounded the test to bring all the tithes, and see if the blessing do not come (Mal. iii. 10). But curious or arbitrary demands for a sign he refused (Mark viii. 11-13). He directs to the test of his prophets by the fulfilment of their message, as in Deut. xviii. 17-22; Jer. xxviii. 9; and would have us expect speedy answers to importunate prayer, as in the parable of the unjust judge (Luke xviii. 1-14). But proposed testings of answers to prayer by seeing if they in special cases break in upon the uniformity of nature will consist neither with the right spirit of prayer, nor with a reverent regard for a personal, divine Author of nature.

Passing by the above forms of temptation, we come to the only remaining specification, where the stress and pressure is both of evil and to evil. The tempter is himself a transgressor, and he intentionally urges another to transgress. This is the more familiar meaning of temptation, and that about which it is the more important that we consider, carefully and thoroughly enough to find the exact truth, whether, in case of the transgression of the tempted, the temptation can be any excuse for it. It was in this form the devil tempted Eve, through appeals to sensuous gratification, and Job by sudden and severe afflictions, and Jesus Christ by selfish and ambitious considerations, and very generally the human race by going about as "a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour"; or as "transforming himself to an angel of light," the more effectually to deceive and destroy. And so many wicked men are tempters to others, and as the children of the devil they are doing the works of their father. Such tempters are on every hand, and multitudes heedlessly or presumptuously put themselves within the influence of

the temptation, and allow themselves to be led captive by Satan at his will. The stress of the tempting influence may be through excited appetite or malicious passion, and the evil to which it urges may be to any degree of enormity; but in all ways the very common propensity is manifested to excuse and palliate the sin by the pressure of the temptation under which it has been committed. If, however, this be only from the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of a depraved heart, while in truth God holds the transgressor fully responsible, notwithstanding the force of temptation, it is of momentous importance to every tempted man, especially to every man consenting to temptation, that he know his true accountability, and get ready to meet it. And in this time of unwonted crimes and aggravated peculation and corruption in both private and public stations, the danger that popular conscience shall be silenced, and the vindication of law and justice be neglected from familiarity with temptation and guilt, makes this question of the moral bearing of temptation upon criminality eminently urgent for thorough investigation and final decision. We propose here to give, at least, an outline of the considerations which must determine the true conclusion.

GOD DOES NOT TEMPT TO EVIL.

The first requisition is to show that God does not tempt to evil. We have noticed a form of temptation in which God is directly said to participate. He puts men on trial, and makes them pass through long processes of severe discipline, and incur liabilities of perverting the designed end of the trial; and in such testing of character and disciplinary experience there is one mode of temptation that God himself employs. Only by such trial can character be formed, and an obedient disposition be secured and confirmed. From the necessities of the case, the moral agent is so to be dealt with, and can neither come to know himself nor be known by others as virtuous and trustworthy, except by sustaining the test and profiting by the discipline. It will be weakness

and misplaced tenderness in any master that shall withhold the training or spare the needed rigor and severity. The trial should be as favorably ordered as the completeness of the discipline will permit; but all complaint of such form of temptation must be unreasonable, and all attempted excuse for misimprovement aggravates the disciple's delinquency, with no disparagement to the master's fidelity.

But, though God so tempt in the ways of trial and discipline, without prejudice to his integrity or benevolence, and giving no opportunity for excuse if in time of such temptation some refuse to be corrected, and fall away into sinful practices, the case would be quite changed under the supposition that God in any way worked directly for evil upon any mind, and tempted in the sense of intentional influence to induce sin. A depraved disposition is already prone to charge its iniquities to hard conditions and unfavorable circumstances, and the pressing urgency from outer nature upon inner constitutional temperament is often pleaded in extenuation for a wicked life. In many ways men make excuses for their sins directly reflecting back upon God, as in some manner arranging his providences or constituting nature so as to facilitate and almost necessitate their transgressions. If, then, experience or revelation could be brought in to favor the conclusion that God designed or desired the sinner's disobedience, this would go far to encourage and strengthen the old Jewish cavil: "Why then doth he find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" What God wishes, and works in or upon me to induce my doing, cannot be sin, at least cannot be all my sin; and for an irreligious life, under such inducements from a divine source, I surely cannot be greatly to blame. But all such attempted palliation of sin must be, and in truth clearly can be, utterly excluded. No practical experience warrants it; no rational speculation sustains it; and scripture declaration expressly and emphatically denies it.

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth

he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James i. 13, 14). Here is more than mere assertion that God does not tempt to evil; the declaration has an ample reason given for it. A tempter to evil must himself have been tempted with evil, and this cannot be of God. God cannot so be tempted, and thus demonstrably God cannot tempt any man. If God entice to sin, he must have come to wish sin; and, as the latter is impossible, the former is necessarily excluded.

So categorical a denial of God's temptability to evil, for the sake of excluding him from all complicity with the evil, and shutting out all excuse for sin from the assumption that God tempted to sin, demands careful consideration, if we are clearly to apprehend the reasons which authorize it.

God is pure Spirit, and hence cannot be tempted as man is through a sentient soul. Man is sense and reason, and so soul and spirit, and thus open to carnal appetites and spiritual inclinations. We now look to man's sentient soul, and find it liable to temptation through sense-gratification and sense-suffering, the common avenue to tempting impulses being in the direction to sense-indulgence. The rational spirit knows in itself what is due to its own honor, and thereby is conscious of claims to keep every sense-appetite subordinate to its own true dignity and integrity. In this is human freedom and the source of moral responsibility. Perpetual inducements come in through sense upon the spirit to yield its claims to their impulses; and so disposing its executive agency is a renunciation of its righteous sovereignty and debasing itself in servitude to the flesh, and such disposition is "the carnal mind," which is "enmity against God." Temptations to this find their inlet with every longing for pleasure and reluctating of pain by the sentient soul, if in conflict with the claims of the spirit. So humanity is constantly liable to be "tempted with evil."

But so God cannot be tempted. His purely spiritual being knows nothing in his own experience of sense-craving or sense-reluctating. Neither the pleasures nor the pains

of a sentient soul belong to God, and it does not pertain to his spirit that it should have consciousness of the longings and loathings of animal nature. No "law in the members" wars against "the law of the mind," that it should bring the spirit in captivity to "the law of sin." No inner sensibility is open to outer appliances, whereby a perverting bias can be thrown upon the source and spring of executive sovereignty. The divine essence is not in a perpetually militant state of watching and defence against constitutional propensities which at any hour may be immoderately excited. Essential and eternal Reason has nothing intrinsic on which unreason can fix and fasten there internal disquiet and disturbances.

Only as God incarnate, "the Word made flesh," can Deity open itself to these forms of temptation. This "Word was with God and was God," taking in unity the man "born of a virgin," can be "tempted in all points like as we are." It is an essential condition of his perfect mediation that temptation become a part of his suffering. Forty days' solitary self-discipline in the desert beyond Jordan, weary and hungry, there opened the occasion for direct assault, through the sentient soul upon the spirit, from the same adversary who had tempted the first human pair. And all through his sorrowing life, destitute, deserted, derided, who had not "where to lay his head," he learned in his own conscious experience how to be "touched with our infirmities," and how to "succor those that are tempted." Yet so tempted with evil, he did not become evil. He was "without sin," and so ready not to tempt, but to help the tempted.

Except as thus conditional to the service the Divine Word humbled himself to accomplish, the pure, Eternal Spirit can have no tempting of sentient enjoying or suffering, and in no way does he yield to forbidden self-indulgence that may make him the tempter of evil to any man. Sin is the abomination he hates, and he never puts his soliciting agency through any sense upon the spirit that it should dispose its agency in the end of any sinful indulgence.

God is absolute Spirit, and so cannot be tempted of evil as created spirits may be. Life is from God; but life cannot be manifested in itself, and only in the forces which embody it. It holds these elemental forces in unity, binds them together by its diffusion through them and assimilation of them into one indivisible organism, and thus constitutes a proper individuality, concrete in itself and separate from other individualities. Its impartation and superinduction upon the forces it assumes and uses is its expression or manifestation; and in this is the true and proper creation of a living individual. Life, separate from individualized forces, cannot be thought into individuality, and this individualizing of life in force from God is that outer expression of life which is thereby a created living being. The created life-individual may be such in its original constitution as shall spontaneously develop into unconscious plant organism, or through a nervous system into conscious animal sensation; but neither the created individual plant nor animal is life separate from its elemental forces, but life expressed in force, and developing or conserving its individual organism. The plant or animal individuality is lost in the dissolution of the organic forces.

Even so, in the higher human sphere, the rational spirit is from God; but reason cannot be manifested in individual being, except as holding together the constituent elements individualized in an organism which is inclusive of itself, and exclusive of all others. The reason as finite comes from the Absolute Reason, but no human individual is created except as force and life and sensation are individualized by the finite reason expressed in them and holding them in organic unity. The human individuality differs from plant and animal individuality, in that the higher bond of imparted reason holds material and living and sentient elements all individualized in the human organism, and the individual organism is inclusive of its own elements and exclusive of all others. The human individual has thus a conscious, sentient life bound up in unity with a rational life; and man, as before said, is

animal and rational, soul and spirit, in one individual. The sentient life is immortalized by the imparted spiritual life which comprehends it, and does not go out in the dissolution of the earthly body, as in animal individuality, but becomes an immortal soul by virtue of the immortal spirit's union with it and claims upon it.

Through this sentient soul, as already considered, many temptations reach the rational spirit, and when the spirit consents the disposition of the man has become "earthly" and "sensual," and when acting out its malignity in its own spiritual self-hood he is "devilish." Man, thus, and angel, whatever elementary varieties may be individualized by each one, is liable to peculiar assaults which may be more directly spiritual. Purely as reason the spirit has self-knowledge, and therein the capability of true self-estimation and the recognition of what is due to the spirit itself. In this is the capability to recognize both personal rights and reciprocal duties, claims of itself from others and duties from itself to others, and it thus opens the occasion for mutual respect in relative degrees through all ranks in social communion. The intuition of these rights and duties carries in it the claim of reverence to superiors, ingenuous frankness to equals, and kind condescension to inferiors. These are peculiarly spiritual virtues, begotten of and in the spirit; and their counterpart vices of irreverence, arrogance, and insolence are also of and in the spirit, and which in exercise through varied relations become sins of pride, envy, malice, revenge, etc., and are more heinous in guilt than the forbidden gratifications of fleshly lusts. Men and angels are open to these spiritual temptations, and in being overcome in their assent they become fallen men and fallen angels.

But these temptations in the spirit come through the necessary subordinations in social communities. Every spirit is held in obligation to the rights of all, and owes duties to the community, and none may leave his proper sphere and invade another's. The selfishness which pushes against another's right is sinful, and personal interests and

ends are to be sought only in consistency with what is due to all; and yet each is where he may be prompted to demand more than is his due, and to give less than is due to others—arrogate prerogatives not his, and abrogate rightful demands of others. In the purely spiritual sphere such assumed antagonisms may be introduced into actual experience, and the demoniac passions of hate, revenge, and scorn may in such a manner be unloosed among finite personalities.

But God as absolute Spirit cannot so be assailed by temptation. In his supreme excellence essentially, he stands beyond all possibility of these tempting assaults which subordination occasions. The throne and sceptre of universal dominion are his in the right of his own absolute dignity and excellence, and all subordinate spirits are most blessed as he is most honored and adored. He cannot put out claims more than his excellency calls for, nor receive homage and service beyond what is due to his majesty and authority; and thus no occasion can arise for selfish ambition to exact more or less than is his due. It cannot be conceived that God may win any advantage to himself by any way turning aside from persistent integrity and exact and strict adherence to his own honor and right. God must do right, and cannot do wrong, not as destitute of the powers of free-agency, but from his perfections excluding inducement to act toward any other end than that most worthy of himself.

One occasion was once given for the Deity to be tempted in spirit; but it was when in the persons of the Godhead one was voluntarily subordinated to another. The divine Logos not merely took our humanity, but he took official rank and dignity in the work of our redemption inferior to the Father. The work demanded just this self-sacrifice and willing condescension, that he who did not at all rob God by his equality with God should take rank and service subordinate to God. Opportunity was so given to the divine Redeemer's spirit for self-seeking, regardless of superior claims. There was here an opening for pride and ambition and presumption, in prompting to action against higher

authority; and, with most malignant audacity and intrepidity, the devil seized the occasion of forty days' fasting to tempt Jesus to act for himself in his own right and on his own authority and in his own interest, aside from the Father, to make the stone to become bread for him; and then changed the temptation to the opposite spiritual perversion of presumptuously trying the superior Authority if he would send angels to save him in casting himself from the pinnacle of the Temple; and, at last, to discard the superior Authority entirely, and worship his enemy. So the divine mind and spirit of the Saviour could be tempted with evil; but his indignant rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan," left no possibility for the obedient Mediator to become a tempter.

But, aside from voluntary subordination in official mediation, no occasion can open for the absolute Spirit to be tempted. No suggestion can reach him, in his fulness, that any deviation from perpetual integrity can turn to any good to him or to his creatures. And, as God cannot in any way be tempted with evil that he himself may become evil, so God cannot tempt any one to evil.

Special Divine influence is for holiness, and not for sin, and thus no excuse for sin. There is a special divine influence in regeneration and sanctification, securing in some a change to holiness and growth in holiness; and it may conversely be supposed that there is a like special influence in man's apostasy and increase in depravity. To such supposition it would be competent and conclusive to answer, that the special agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification is in strict accordance with the free and responsible agency of the new-born and the sanctified, and no beginning nor increase of holiness in any man is without the concurrence of his own free disposing. And thus, what the Holy Spirit does is not a matter of credit for the sinner in his obedience; and if, according to the supposition, the Spirit works in the same way in man's fall and growing iniquity, it will be in full accord with the sinner's free disposing; and so what the Holy Spirit does will not be to the

sinner's discredit, and can be no excuse for his concurrence with such supposed depraving influence of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit's agency and the man's agency, if concurrent toward sin, are still distinct in origin and responsibility, and each must take for himself the accountability of his own.

But, though such supposition might be so answered, and the answer cut off all excuse for sin through the whole mystery of the Spirit's working to secure it, yet is there a shorter and better answer. There is no such official work of the Spirit to secure sin, as in the plan of redemption there is to secure holiness. God is said to have "hardened the heart of Pharaoh," and that "whom he will he hardeneth"; but such declarations are to be interpreted in agreement with the divine oath, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11); and with the apostle's declaration of "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4), but which cannot be, if God wishes and works on some to be sinful and lost. God's truth and providences result in depravity by man's perversion, not by God's co-agency. It may be insisted on that God's Spirit works directly on the human spirit, and so affects the whole mind as intentionally to secure its free obedience, and that such is the Spirit's office-work in salvation; but nothing countenances the unworthy assumption that the Spirit's official mission is directly and intentionally to work upon any mind to deprave and ruin it.

In no way, thus, will the sinner encounter temptation to evil from God. He would that all sinners be of their own free consent obedient, and he does what of right he can to have them so; and if they transgress and perish they are inexcusably their own destroyers.

THE PROCESS OF SUCCESSFUL TEMPTATION PRECLUDES ALL
EXCUSE FOR TRANSGRESSION.

Temptation as an influence designed for evil may come

from varied sources, through varied means, and under varied conditions. Still, in some respects, all temptation to evil is necessarily restricted to a specific process, and can attain its end only in fixed and definite ways of operation. The temptation can come only from a finite source, and the tempter must stand external to us, and work on us through intervening media, and can make no immediate changes in either the constitution or moral disposition of the tempted subject. He can know the heart of the tempted one only as disclosed in overt action. God only can make constitutional changes, and work immediately upon mind, and read directly the human heart; and God, as shown, does not tempt with evil. There must also be at least two distinct personal agents, — the tempter and the tempted, — and under any temptation the tempted must himself consent to the tempting influence, and by his own agency execute the tempting intent, or he cannot be made the guilty victim of the tempting assault. All temptation to sin will be harmless to the tempted, except as his spirit disposes its agency to the ends of the tempter, and so the man be “led away of his own lust and enticed.” We shall be further helped to clear views of unmitigated guilt in transgression under temptation by keeping in mind these persistent conditions in all processes of temptation, and thus specially considering the two distinct agencies in all possible cases of successful tempting. We need to contemplate separately what the tempter does, and then what the tempted must do.

The tempter can work only in the application of seducing motives. He may use his constitutional faculties and acquired capability of discernment in apprehending peculiarity of temperament and habitual inclination and state of predisposition in the tempted, as these shall have manifested themselves in outward acts and experience, and may so learn very exactly the susceptibility to be excited, and determine more cunningly his motives and the manner of their presentation. The subtlety and skill in using the most specious ways of delusion and solicitation will measure the force of

the temptation, and also aggravate in its degree the wickedness of the tempter; but in reference to accountable agency all this originates and terminates in the tempter, and he only stands blame-worthy for it. He cannot make his agency reach any further, nor accomplish any more. He cannot physically touch the sensibilities addressed, nor modify the constitutional temperament he is dealing with, nor can he alter the natural qualities of the tempting objects presented, and still less can he efficiently fix the disposition and direct the executive will of the tempted. He may apply motives, as they are, to the susceptibility as he shall find it, and must leave motive and susceptibility to excite and be excited as from their intrinsic natures they must; but he can make no essential changes in either. The sentient soul may so be made to lust against the dictates of the spiritual conscience, but at this point is the terminus of the tempter's work. He must stop there, and wait the issue, which is to him wholly uncontrollable, and as yet indeterminate and unknown by him. The tempter has here filled his sphere, and he cannot go over and invade that of another personality.

The fiercest assaults of any tempter may be wholly put aside by any one tempted. The tempted is in an impregnable fortress, and completely safe, until his own treacherous hand shall unbar the gate. There is no sin in merely being tempted, and the man *then* only becomes the sinner when he puts his own voluntariness in alliance with the tempting influence. Whatever apology on the score of human sympathy with human infirmity we may be disposed to make for a much tempted fellow-creature, it must be in consideration of our conscious weakness and fear of what we should be liable to do in the trial, and not that a strictly righteous verdict can take anything from the sin of consenting, to put over with the sin of tempting. The two kinds of sin in their respective criminalities stand separately, each in its own enormity, and neither can take anything of or from the other, nor make any aggregate diminution. Whatever the temptation, the tempted might and should have resisted; his

consent to the temptation was his own, and is wholly inalienable. No other can divide and share his guilt, and so it must forever stand inexcusable.

But, up to this point, the sin of all that has been done is in the tempter alone, and nothing of disobedience has yet come from the tempted. His sensibilities have been awakened and the appetitive impulse excited; but in such constitutional working of sentient nature there is nothing of spiritual disposing and moral doing. Had the first temptation of our race stopped at this point, in only awakening appetitive impulse to the forbidden fruit, "as good for food and as desirable to make one wise," the tempted would have stood sinless, like the second Adam, to whom the temptation to make bread came "when he was very hungry and would have eaten." The tempter's sin was here finished, and his guilt as heinous as it could have been in the success of his tempting work; but the sin was of the devil only, and in the case of the first parents, as of Jesus, the sin would have been all the devil's, and not theirs, if, as Jesus did, they had said, "Get thee hence, Satan."

In all processes of tempting, the first thing is the preparation for and the applying of the tempting motive, and in fully accomplishing this the tempting work is consummated, and the overt deed stands out for God to judge and punish; but if the tempted has not assented, and put his own will in execution of the appetitive impulse, the moral guilt is the tempter's alone, and the tempted has as yet no sin to excuse, nor criminality that needs palliation.

The tempted must act in voluntary execution of the tempter's design, in order to his transgression. The temptation was finished in the tempter's finished work. If there is, then, to be any advance in the process, the agency of the tempted must begin, and mingle in accordant concurrence with the agency of the tempter. When here the tempted stands firm, and refuses all complicity with the soliciting influence, he is not, and only the tempter is, a sinner. And if he yield assent, and put his spirit in subserviency to the excited sense-

impulse, this is of his origination, and the transgression is his sin; and he only, and not the tempter, must stand chargeable for it. Each agent has his own intent and executive act, and in these his own sin, and for precisely that which is his must each be answerable—the tempter for tempting, and the tempted for concurring.

COLLATERAL CONSIDERATIONS RATHER AGGRAVATE THAN EXCUSE TRANSGRESSION UNDER TEMPTATION.

Beside the exclusion of God from all temptation to evil, and the inalienable guilt of the tempter and the tempted, respectively, there are still some collateral considerations carrying the evidence even further than mere inexcusableness of transgression under temptation, the very temptation rather heightening the guilt.

The tempted are thereby put under peculiar obligations to resent the insult and rebuke the tempter. No sin is more obvious and detestable than that of inducing another to sin. As if his own transgressions were insufficient to satiate his spirit of disloyalty and rebellion, the tempter seeks directly to involve others in the same guilt and ruin. Whether from encouragement to himself in having companions in iniquity, or the gratification of a malignant desire to ruin others, or so deep hate to righteous authority that he will seek to spread and intensify the hatred, or perhaps a combination of all these selfish and malicious designs, nothing can be more abhorrent to all virtuous sentiment than the disclosure of such base motives in the very fact of the tempting. A solicitation to any vicious indulgence, or a plausible pleading for any disobedience as justifiable or excusable, should at once arouse the suspicions of the tempted, and awaken sharp discernment to detect the most subtle tempting designs. That heedlessness or credulous weakness which permits the imposition to work out its deception is inexcusable; and when the ensnaring purpose further opens, no sterner imperative can come to any man than that, for virtue's sake, he resent the insult, and rebuke the insolent presumption.

Our Saviour's example is more than a warrant, and imposes on us the duty to mark our detestation by his own indignant "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Nothing becomes that manly valor which is the essence of virtue but such prompt resentment; and if, instead, we listen and lean to and at last fall in with the base allurements, it can only augment our disgrace to put the insult of the temptation as an excuse for the pollution of our assenting. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Temptation repelled elevates character and confirms integrity. It would be foolhardy rashly to run within the influence of the tempter. Knowing the liabilities to yield and be overcome, it will be presumptuous to dare the dangers of tempting positions. Yet if, in the course of natural occurrences, and especially in the fulfilment of the claims of benevolence or of duty, we encounter temptation in enticements to indulgence or threatenings of danger, it may not be our misfortune, but a fair offer for attaining thereby a higher excellency. Temptations overcome discouragement and drive off the tempter; the tempted becomes the victor, and the tempter the vanquished. By his manly firmness, the assailed one triumphs, and successive victories elevate him to become the veteran conqueror. Courage is gained on the side of virtue, and despair settles upon the deceitful and presumptuous assailant. As the victor gains new resolution, and rises in conscious worthiness, his integrity of character becomes confirmed, and he is more surely and more safely to be trusted. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life" (James i. 12).

On such account, one need not regret the occurrence of temptations in his providential experiences; for they give to him their opportunities of magnifying his love to truth and righteousness and manifesting more fully his loyalty to God. The carelessness which perverts, or the cowardice which deserts such occasions of trial, and yields to the tempter, or runs from his assigned post, loses all the offered advantage,

and subjects himself to reproach. He might have foiled the tempter, and brought honor to God. The chastity of Joseph and the patient firmness of Job were the more pure and precious by their triumphant fidelity in the hours of temptation; and whoso falls in such assaults upon his virtue is both excuseless in his sin, and also blameworthy in losing the greater magnanimity and dignity he might have attained. As the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, without which he could not have been so complete a Saviour for us, so in this he has left to us an example, that we follow in his steps, taking bravely the temptations which must needs be met in the ways of providence and duty, and standing firm to the end. The severity of the conflict will add its proportional hardihood for coming battles, and secure victory in future assaults, and neither the avoidance of such incidental temptations, nor the yielding to their influence, can make their occurrence an excuse for either the pusillanimity of the desertion or the ignominy of the fall.

Listening to temptation will bring, first, transgression, and then the tempting of others. When the tempting insinuation first arises, it will be inexcusable to give the least favor to the solicitation. So far to listen to the tempting suggestion as to hold it in meditation of anticipated indulgence is already an admitting of the poison and a beginning of assistance towards its deadly diffusion. The appetite is awakened into an impulse towards forbidden gratification, and this is now cherished by the tempted as a welcome topic of thought and fond imagination. It may be an appeal to the mind in any form of sense-enjoyment, like an acquisition of wealth or power or pleasure; but the longing for it has been excited, and the will now so far actively assents as to hold and cherish it, and so the temptation has actively struck in. The next step soon follows in casting about to see what means there may be for the execution, and then quite readily comes, with perhaps some hesitancy and misgiving, the assenting agency of incipient arrangements toward ultimate accomplishment. The man has already become an actual sinner, and the sin

will soon finish itself with a full and fixed disposition in the way of transgression, and so bring forth moral death in the spirit. Prompt rebuke and resistance at the start would as surely have led to ultimate victory and spiritual integrity and life; but the consenting dalliance with the offered temptation was the opening inlet to the actual transgression.

When, now, the transgression has been consummated, the easy and sure consequent is, that this actual transgressor begins himself to be a tempter, and throws influences over others to induce their transgression. No man consents to sin, and passes along in practices of iniquity, but he soon becomes a direct agent in destroying more victims in the same way. The mischief spreads like a pestilence, and each new transgressor is straightway a new tempter, and in every case the "one sinner destroyeth much good." The burning brand is lighted, and will not quench and put out the fire of itself; it stands in the midst of other combustibles, on which it seizes, and we are soon forced to witness "how great a matter a little fire kindleth." If the temptation cannot excuse your consenting to transgress, how much less so your going over to the tempter's side, and joining him in doing the devil's work! The last was as a moral certainty involved in the first, and by so much aggravates the guilt of the first parley with the tempter.

Special divine strength is offered to the tempted. Not only has the man the native powers of free-agency whereby the spirit may control the sense, and hold every appetite and passion in subjection to reason, however strongly these may be influenced by temptation, but, beyond this, special spiritual help is graciously offered to every tempted soul. The rule proposed by divine revelation, on which God will deal with all men, is this: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Of "our merciful and faithful High-Priest" it is said: "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"

(Heb. ii. 18). And, on this account, we are all exhorted to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need" (Heb. iv. 16). No tempted man is left to the necessity of meeting any tempter alone. There are always more helps in every spiritual conflict offered than there are tempting influences applied, and the spiritual eye may always see mountains "full of horses and chariots of fire round about him." We may have often to wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but against "spiritual wickedness in high places," yet we do not go to the warfare on our own charges. Full armor is given, and available defences offered, and strong auxiliaries are close at hand. All fleeing from or yielding in the conflict must be an ungrateful rejection of this expensively provided and graciously offered help; and this, instead of excusing, enhances the guilt of complying with the tempter's design.

CONCLUSION.

The conclusion now attained and established has important practical bearings of a theological, personal, and social character. It will be for the completion of our discussion of this subject, if we here note some of the more important of these practical matters as they stand related to the facts of temptation to evil.

Theologically, no body of divinity can be sound which has running through it the doctrine that God wishes his creatures to sin, and works in or upon them to induce it.

There is sin, there long has been, and ever will be sin, within the moral government of God. The truth of God's being and the fact of sin may both be recognized with no manifested apprehension of any disagreement between them; or, if noticed, the seeming disagreement may be left with no attempt at any philosophical reconciliation; or very strenuous efforts may be made to harmonize, in speculation, the facts of God's omnipotent and universal sway with his permission of sin; we say nothing here of the comparative proprieties or possibilities of the three cases, but design most emphatically

to affirm, whether philosophical speculation be applied in expounding it or not, that the true creed on this point must be, Sin did not originate in God. He had no complicity of solicitation or approbation with its beginning in any of his creatures.

Somehow, sin has come into God's system of government against his authority; and its continuance, as well as its origin, leaves the sin to be abominable in his sight; and it cannot consist with this that he wishes for it and works to secure it. All theorizing or teaching subversive of this truth, or obscuring its clearness, should be rejected without ceremony or apology, no matter how ingenious the speculation or earnest the teaching may be. Sin at the centre of a theological system must exclude reason from the centre, and the entire sphere must then be unreasonable. No theology is preferable to the most labored system of doctrines which makes sin desirable at the source of all moral agency. Better atheism, even, than belief in a God who wishes and works to get disobedience to his commandments.

Personally, the transgressor has nothing to do with excuses. Having sinned, no matter under what tempting inducements, it is only a result of the heart's deceitfulness that an attempt is made to interpose apologies and excuses, and thus avoid responsibilities. It is the witness of its love for delusions and "trust in lies." There is ever in such palliations an aversion to standing out and taking to himself what is his own, and a seeking to throw on others the burdens which are not theirs. No such alienation of personal guilt is possible; since, no matter what the tempting source may have been, there was the open way for escape. And so every sinner is held by a just claim to ingenuously admit his responsibility for exactly that which is his, and confess his guilt in it, and to expect a settlement of it in some way himself, both with his own conscience and with God, and excusing the sin is no part of his business. It adds immensely to his already incurred disgrace to attempt the baseness of somehow shuffling off upon another the

demerit which belongs alone to him. He listened to the tempter, and consented to his designs, and this agency was his, and not the tempter's; and the only honest, righteous course is frankly to own it, and stand himself alone in bearing what is his due. The tempter must stand for his tempting agency; but the tempted must as exclusively stand for his consenting act, and what the tempter has done and must answer for cannot have an excusing efficacy for what the tempted has done. One thing only is in place for the tempted transgressor, as either satisfactory to his own conscience or to God, which is, to evince a reformed disposition in honest confession of the fact and the guilt of his sin, and henceforth stand in resistance to all coming temptations. The very least is the best in the way of apology and excuse, and the most prompt in the way of acknowledgment and reformation.

Socially, there are two directions in which we are to turn our practical consideration: First, how shall we treat the tempted transgressor? The tempted ones who have sinned and fallen are all around us. We must needs go out of the world, if we would refuse to "keep company" with the tempted and fallen; yea, we ourselves are in just the condition of having sinned under some tempter's influence. How shall the social intercourse of such a community be regulated? Compassion for the tempted is right, and our pity should be proportioned to the stress of their temptation; for to this extent has been their misfortune, and not their fault. Their sin has come with their assenting, and therein transgressing, and even in their sinning, though disapproving, we may still have pity for them. So God pities us his sinning creatures, and "remembers that we are dust." He takes fully into account our weak, frail, sensuously susceptible constitution, and proportions blame in that direction, as well as in reference to the strength of the tempting influence. But, compassionate as God is toward tempted transgressors, he yet holds each to his just accountability. He bates no jot of deserved blame and disapprobation for any man's sin. His pity never

overruns his righteousness, nor does he ever allow the guilty to run away with his pity. He measures the desert accurately, and makes the response to follow exactly. God puts nothing to our account which is not ours; but what is ours he neither overlooks nor permits us to put off from ourselves upon others. Just what the guilt is he puts back upon the transgressor, and makes the sinner confess and repent and forsake, or no measure of his pity for that sinner makes God to forgive. Pardon without such reformation would involve the integrity of the divine character in the issue, and damage his kingdom in a way that no considerations of compassion could repair.

In like manner as God pities, so should we; carrying the apology for sinners so far as to secure full exemption of blame and exclusion of evil from them for that which is not theirs. But for just what is theirs we must manifest our disapprobation and hold to full account, despite all sympathy, whether the account is to be settled with us or with the law of the state or with the law of God. The exposure of appalling corruption and weak and wicked prevarication, falsehood, and perhaps perjury, to escape from manifest complications in the iniquity, tell how wide and powerful temptation has spread even in the high places of our nation, and it becomes the sterner duty for every honest man to stand firm, although he stands alone, and "in any wise rebuke his neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." The virtuous man becomes himself the tempter, when he holds his peace and keeps back rebuke in times of abounding iniquity. The strongest claim on all the good is that they hold all transgressors to their full and fair account.

Finally, how treat the tempter? It is, doubtless, the part of humanity to pity even the tempter; but in the light of his tempting agency, it must be pity either for unmitigated selfishness or for unmingled malevolence. The tempter sins beyond his own ruin in seeking the ruin of others, inducing them to become instruments to his forbidden indulgences, or, still more wickedly, from sheer malignity and malice

aforethought, he leads the other into crime with the depraved intent of a demon. His sin, any way, is of vastly deeper guilt in tempting than that of his victim in consenting, and for just this deeper guilt he should be held to account. The aggravated guilt is his, and no part of the sin of the tempted. No success in his selfish or malicious intent, nor any advantage from power or position which his success may have gained, and with which he may be seeking to defend himself, should be allowed to screen from full exposure, or shield from full responsibility. Public sentiment and penal law should ever hold the seducer to any sin amenable to a sterner account and a sorer infliction than the tempted transgressor.

The tempting influence may have been flattery or bribery, the preparation and appliance of favoring occasion, or the pressure of harsh constraint; but, in any case, our pity for the tempter has done all it should, when it has turned from him such blame and censure as is undeserved; and our deep disapprobation of his selfish or malignant criminality should lead us to hold him responsible to the full extent of all the guilt proved upon him. Any sympathetic impulses which may be allowed to interfere with this full measure when the day for penal execution has come, will be cruelty to the innocent and treachery to social safety. When public sympathy or public laxity of moral sentiment leaves the corrupters of society in impunity, the certain dissolution and speedy destruction of that community are inevitable.