

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN IN TEMPTATION

COUNSEL AND CONSOLATION FOR THE TEMPTED

By Octavius Winslow, 1877

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15

"Tis one thing to be tempted,
Another thing to fall."--Shakespeare.

[Preface](#)

[1. The Tempter, Occasion, and Scene of Christ's Temptation](#)

[2. Christ and the Christian Tempted to Distrust Divine Providence](#)

[3. Christ and the Christian Tempted to Self-Destruction](#)

[4. Christ and the Christian Tempted to False and Idolatrous Worship](#)

[5. Christ and the Christian Tempted with Worldly Grandeur and Possession](#)

[6. The Sympathy of Angels with Christ and the Christian in Temptation](#)

[7. The Sympathy of Christ with the Christian in Temptation](#)

[8. The Final Overthrow of the Tempter and Blessedness of the Tempted](#)

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

PREFACE.

The design of the present volume is not to examine the various hypotheses advanced as to the mode by which the Son of God was assailed by Satan in the wilderness. Accepting, as the author unhesitatingly does, the received and orthodox opinion that the Temptation, as narrated by the Evangelist, is not allegorical, but what it professes to be, a veritable fact,-the representation, not of a mythical, but of an actual transaction,-he finds no difficulty in presenting it in a point of light which he does not remember to have seen hitherto attempted, viz., the identity, in all its essential features, of Christ's temptation and those of the Christian.

Acceding-as we are bound-to the inspired declaration that our Lord was "tempted in all points like as we are," it follows that there must exist a corresponding coincidence in the collision of Christ with Satan, and the spiritual conflict in which every good man is engaged of the same nature and with the same foe. We do not, therefore regard a single attack of Christ by the Devil as not having its counterpart, in some degree, with the experience of every Christian. Nor can we imagine a fact more instructive and consolatory to those who, from the same source and with the same weapons, "are in heaviness through manifold temptations," than the assurance of the personal and perfect *oneness* of the tempted Head of the Church-as its great sympathetic nerve-with the tempted members of His Body.

The author devoutly trusts that the study of this entwined interest of Christ and His people-however imperfectly presented-may, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, prove as soothing and sanctifying to the mind of the reader, as its discussion in these pages has been to his own. To the Divine benediction of the Triune God, and to the gracious acceptance of the one tempted Church of Christ, he prayerfully and affectionately commends the volume.

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

1. THE TEMPTER, OCCASION, AND SCENE OF CHRIST'S TEMPTATION.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil"-Matt. iv. x.

No chapter of our Lord's brief yet eventful life-if we except the narrative of His Death and Resurrection-is replete with such marvelous interest, profound instruction, and rich comfort to the Christian Church, as His conflict with Satan in the wilderness. Nor will this appear surprising if we weigh the fact that Christ was a representative Person. In no instance of His life did He act other than in His official relation. Thus all He taught, did, and endured had a *substitutionary* reference to His people, and in no instance was exclusively of a personal and private character. That our Lord's Temptation was an indispensable part of His mediatorial work,-that it entered essentially into the lesson of "obedience He was to learn by the things which He suffered,"-and, moreover, that it constituted an absolute element of His personal fitness to "succour them that are tempted, being in all points tempted like as we are," will not admit of a doubt. Yet, nevertheless, all that He taught, did, and endured was as the legal and accepted Representative of His Church, in whose place, as its "Head over all things," He stood. Turn we now to the study of our Lord's Temptation, as endured, not exclusively for Himself, but as in mystical union with His people,-"*tempted in all points like as we are.*" The inspired narrative is simple and concise. The Evangelist Matthew, with inimitable simplicity, thus introduces the remarkable event: "*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.*"

"To be tempted of the Devil"-The language of the inspired narrator admits of no reasonable misconception. He speaks of the Tempter in terms perfectly intelligible. There are individuals who, in their judicial blindness and supercilious self-conceit--influenced, perhaps, in their opinion in many cases by the terror which guilt inevitably inspires have found it convenient and soothing to ignore the positive existence of Satan altogether, affirming that there is no Devil! Others, while admitting the existence of a Prince of Evil, whose ravages they dare not deny, whose subtlety they cannot explain, and whose malignity baffles their astutest comprehension, yet reject the idea of personality, substituting for it the vague, incoherent notion of a principle of evil-an impersonal influence-a phantom of power! That our Lord was not acted upon by an abstract principle of evil-a shadowy, impalpable foe-all the circumstances of this most wonderful transaction clearly demonstrate. But the doctrine of the personality, equally as the actual existence of Satan, admits of the most rational and simple proof.

Among the angels *"who kept not their first estate, and are now reserved under chains and darkness to the judgment of the great day,"* Satan, or the Devil, must be numbered; to whose pre-eminent dignity and power-the "tall archangel" of Milton-was conceded by his compeers the rank and supremacy of the Prince, or Leader of the countless legions spoken of as *"the Devil and his angels."* It is impossible intelligently to study the agency and power of Satan as recorded in the Bible, and yet predicate that agency and power as a mere influence, or abstract principle of evil! That the personification of a principle of evil, according to a well-known figure of speech, may exist apart from any claim to a real and personal existence, we fully concede. The Book of Job supplies numerous instances of this personification, where wisdom-height-famine-death, &c., are thus personified. But no obscurity veils the sense in which the figure of speech is here employed: every intelligent reader understands that the impassioned language is merely designed by the writer to impart a poetic animation and effect to his discourse. But how vastly different the style and force when Satan is the subject both of Christ and the inspired penman! Can language like this be predicated of a mere attribute-influence-a principle of evil: *"Satan sins from the beginning."* *"Ye are of your father the Devil, and the works of your father ye do: when he speaks of a lie, he speaks of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."* *"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil."* Does this language of Christ and the Apostle sound like a figure of speech-a principle-an influence,-or, is it of a personal existence-a being of vast intellect, consummate subtlety, fiendish malignity, clothed with a power, exerting an agency and ruling over an empire, second only to God Himself-of whom the sacred writers speak, and against whose machinations the Apostle thus warns us: *"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith."* Accept the Unitarian hypothesis of an abstract principle of evil, a mere influence or attribute, as all that is meant in the Bible of the Great Tempter, and as affording a correct interpretation of these passages we have quoted proving his personality, and we have an example of *reductio absurdum* of the most felicitous description!

O Christian! forget not that in the great moral conflict in which you are enlisted, you are opposed by no mere principle, or influence, or phantom of evil, but by a Foe possessing a distinct personal existence, to whom-without the slightest deification-we ascribe an intelligence, power, and presence second only to the Divine Being Himself: whose presence is everywhere and at the same moment; who is conversant of your every action, and who reads your every thought, volition, and purpose, with all the ease and accuracy of a

book! *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."*

Passing from this view of the Tempter, let us consider the Temptation itself.

The *Occasion* of our Lord's Temptation was remarkably significant,-it was on the *solemn and holy administration of His Baptism*. Immediately after His submission to this sacred rite-immediately following His "fulfillment of all righteousness," immediately after the heavens had opened and the Spirit had descended upon Him-and the Father had testified to His Divine Sonship, and His well-pleasing-immediately that He had thus, by His Baptism, inaugurated His public ministry-lo! *"He was driven into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil!"* How similar and impressive this feature of Christ and the Christian's temptation! Our Lord, as the Mediator of His Church, had lessons to learn which could only be learned in this fiery conflict-a fitness to be attained as the sympathizing High Priest of His people, which only could be acquired as He Himself was tempted in all points as we are. No wonder, then, that, while His robes were yet streaming with the baptismal waters, and the halo of the Spirit's glory yet encircled His head, and the cadence of His Father's voice yet lingered upon His ear, that He should be led into the depths of the forest-the abode of wild beasts-to battle with the "Prince of Darkness," surrounded and backed by the confederated host of countless demons!

Is not this often the experience of the believer? In nothing, perhaps, is the identity of Christ and the Christian more signal. Have not some of our sharpest temptations, and sorest trials, and heaviest afflictions immediately succeeded a season of high, holy, spiritual exercise? After we have discharged some pious duty-have obeyed some Divine command-have performed some Christian service,-after a season of close communion with God, and a gracious manifestation of the Savior to the soul: lo! we have descended from the Mount, and are led into the wilderness to be assailed and wounded by some deadly shaft of the Devil! Thus was it with Paul: descending from the third heaven-glowing with its effulgence, and filled with the rapture of the scenes he had beheld, and the music he had heard-lo! he is led yet deeper into the wilderness, to become a shining mark for the enemy's flaming shaft-*"the messenger of Satan to buffet him."* Be not surprised, then, if thus it is with you, O Christian! Never have we greater need to be whole nights in our watch-tower-to be more strongly fortified against the assaults of the Devil, than when descending from the mount of transfiguration, or emerging from a fresh baptism 'in the sea and in the cloud' of God's love.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil." The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Temptation of Christ-and thus His association with us in all our temptations-is a most remarkable and instructive feature. In the symbol of a dove He had just appeared in the baptismal scene of our Lord; and now, in a not less remarkable and significant way, He appears on the field in one of the most important events of Christ's life. The forms of expression which record it vary, yet all agree as to the personal and actual relation of the Holy Spirit with the circumstance. Matthew records the more gentle influence of the Spirit-"led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Mark expresses it in stronger terms-"the Spirit *drove* Him into the wilderness"-impelled Him, as it were, by a strong, irresistible influence. Luke says, "Jesus being *full of the Holy Ghost*, returning from Jordan," &c. The original text, perhaps, more literally and expressively renders it-"Then was Jesus *carried as by the Spirit*." But whatever the force which the Holy Spirit employed, enough that He was personally connected with our Lord in His conflict with the Evil One-sustaining, comforting, and crowning Him with victory. Descending upon Him in the emblem of a dove at His Baptism, He now appears in the closest sympathy with His Temptation-a twofold baptism thus imparted to our Lord,-the baptism of water, and the baptism of the Spirit!

And thus, beloved, associated with all our temptations, is the Holy Spirit our Shield and Comforter. Not a shaft can touch, not a temptation befall us, but the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us as His temple, is present to quench the dart, or, if it wounds us, to heal, comfort, and sanctify. Thus in all the assaults of our great adversary the Devil, every Christian has the same Holy Spirit that led Christ to the scene of His trial, to prepare us for, to maintain us under, and to bring us through, the fiery ordeal; never for a moment withdrawing His presence, or averting His eye from the course of the winged arrow, or the inflamed wound of the victim.

The place of Christ's temptation was "*the wilderness*." Our Lord was already upon the border of the wilderness of Judea: but it was necessary that He should be led deeper into its remoteness and solitude-a depth so profound and desolate, that one of the Evangelists records the fact that He was "*with the wild beasts*," far removed from the abode and intercourse of man. The Son of God herding, as it were, with the brute creation-the companion of the untamed denizens of the forest!-O Thou glorious tempted One! to what abasement did Thou not submit, that, thus trained in the school of temptation, Thou might be *one* with Thy saints in theirs!

It is in this wilderness of the world we too find the scene of our temptation. The world itself is not the least successful agent of temptation employed by

Satan to accomplish his hellish designs. The *world* is one of the greatest snares of the Christian. Its scenes-its grandeur-its show-its refinement-its friendship-its science-its pleasure-its wealth, its pomp-yea, its very religion, all conspire to give significance and force to the warnings of God's Word: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away."* *"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed."* But, apart from the world itself there is nothing in our individual history which Satan may not make the occasion and instrument of a temptation. Our social position in the world may be one of peculiar snare; our calling in life especially so: our sore trials, crushing afflictions, and pressing needs all may furnish ample material for the purpose and devices of the Enemy. Yea, there is nothing that may not be an instrument of sore temptation-our poverty and wealth; our exalted position and our low estate; the publicity, the privacy of our life; our loves and hatreds, friends and foes may all become powerful engines of evil in the hands of our great, terrible, powerful, and unslumbering Enemy. The books we read-the literature we cultivate-the science we pursue-the recreations we indulge;-yea, the very religions we profess, and the Christian services we promote,-may, with all their apparent innocence and sanctity, but conceal from our eye the slimy trail and the deadly venom of the serpent! Then, *"let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices."*

Settling in our individual consciousness, scripturally and honestly, the momentous question, on whose side we are arrayed-that of the Great Tempter, or that of the Great Tempted One;-let us, treading in the footsteps of Him who was in all points tempted like as we are, "put on the whole

armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."*

[Home](#)

[QUOTES](#)

[SERMONS](#)

[BOOKS](#)

2. CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN TEMPTED TO DISTRUST DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."-Matt. iv. 2-4.

Such was the first temptation of our Lord. And the intelligent reader will not fail to trace a striking analogy with the temptation presented to our first parents: both temptations having to do with *appetite*, both springing from the same source, and both involving an indictment of God: the one, impeaching the Divine veracity; the other, the Divine goodness. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat." And so listening to the declaration of the serpent-"*Ye shall not surely die*"-and yielding to the temptation, she ate of the fruit, and brought death into our world and all our woe. And thus in both cases-that of the First and that of the Second Adam-the temptation took the form of an appeal to *appetite*. "*And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered.*"

Satan, with an intelligence and cunning peculiarly his own, knows how to shape his assault to the time and circumstance of the assailed. In no instance were his knowledge and subtlety more conspicuous than now, and in no instance was his shaft leveled at so illustrious a mark. It was of the *physical* condition of our Lord that Satan now took advantage. Forty days and forty nights' abstinence from food-while the fact on the one hand demonstrated His Deity, on the other it confirmed His Humanity-must have produced an effect upon His bodily frame, intensely exhausting. How natural, yet how artful, that Satan, availing himself of this peculiarly trying position of Christ, should select from his quiver an arrow so singularly appropriate and so precisely aimed! And in this particular we trace a close parallel of the Christian's temptation to Christ's. In both instances the enemy adroitly adapts his temptation to the individual circumstances of his victim. Seizing upon our physical, mental, and spiritual condition-the infirmity of the body, the depression of the mind, and the spiritual phases of the soul-he selects the most fitting shaft, and with the accuracy of an eye that never misses, hits the very centre of his mark. The appeal of Satan, as we have remarked, was to the physical feeling of *hunger*-the most natural and powerful of all the animal conditions of our nature. It has exerted and vindicated its all-potent and stern authority in instances where intellect the most commanding, and

genius the most brilliant, and heroism the most lion-hearted, and even piety the most fervent, have acknowledged its supremacy and kissed its scepter. And now came the battle! Availing himself of this physical infirmity-the painful, gnawing, cravings of nature-the subtle Foe thus approaches with his battery- "*When the Tempter came to Him he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.*" How suitable and subtle this form of temptation! His first step is to place in a questionable light the Divine Sonship of our Lord: "*If Thou be the Son of God.*" He does not-and he dare not-deny it; but investing the fact with a thin transparent veil of reality, he would fain throw upon our Lord the proof of His Divine Messiahship. Full well, and despairingly, did the wily Demon know that Christ was the Son of God! Listen, my reader, to the reluctant yet honest confession: "The unclean spirit cried out, saying, What have I to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." "And devils (demons) came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God." Satan delights in a shining mark! The loftier the position and the holier the employment, the greater is his malignity and the more artful and persevering his assault. Oh, were ever before, or since, his barbed arrows hurled at such a being as Christ? Such is the form in which he often moulds his temptation of the Christian. He will set you doubting your sonship and questioning your saintship, and then set you upon a line of unscriptural and questionable proof, which will but give countenance to his charge, and involve the fact of your conversion in a yet more impenetrable mystery. An important truth confronts us here-viz., that the devils never absolutely denied, but invariably acknowledged, the Deity of our Lord. It was left for man-fallen, sinful man-to do what demons never attempted-to pluck the diadem of Divinity from His brow, and trail it in the dust!

And now, mark the subtle form of the temptation: "If Thou be the Son of God-or, as the original would sustain the rendering, 'Seeing Thou art the Son of God'-*command that these stones be made bread.*" How natural and plausible the temptation! Jesus was enduring the torturing pangs of hunger: how natural and how easy to have proved His Divinity by thus supplying the pressing needs of His Humanity! That He could by a single volition have converted the stones into bread, Satan himself did not doubt. But would it have been morally right? Would He not thus have brought His miraculous power into collision with Divine providence? Most assuredly! He would have performed a miracle at the expense of His Father's glory. And how does our Lord quench this flaming dart of Satan? With what weapon does He foil His subtle foe? It is with "*The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*" "*He answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*" The meaning of these words is obvious.

Our Lord, as man, lived as much a life of faith on the Father as we. We too much overlook this fact. He could not in all points have been tempted like as we are had this not been so. Oh, I love to trace this *life of faith* which my Lord and Savior lived! And when I am tempted and tried-when the 'cruse of oil and the barrel of meal' are well-nigh exhausted, oh it is blessed to recall the moment when He who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, was an hungered and thirsted; and as Man, poor, needy, and often dependent upon the bounty of others-for the holy women ministered unto Him of their substance-He trusted in the providence and promise of His God. It was the taunt of His murderers when writhing in agony upon the cross-"He trusted in God: *let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him.*" Little thought they to what a blessed fact in our Lord's history they were unwittingly testifying-the faith of Christ in His Father!

To this particular assault of Satan the Christian is constantly exposed. We have remarked upon Satan's wisdom and sagacity in moulding his temptations to the circumstances of the tempted. In nothing, perhaps, is this more apparent than in availing himself of times of difficulty and need to inject distrust of the Divine power and goodness. To the Christian in temporal embarrassment he will suggest a worldly mode of relief, compromising the simplicity of his faith and dishonoring the faithfulness of his Lord. "Command these stones that they be made bread." To a man in deep and pressing poverty-a true Christian or a worldling-he will insinuate some scheme of obtaining money of doubtful expediency-the gambling-table, the turf, the stock-exchange, or some other speculative mode equally dishonest and dishonorable;-so tempting the bait and so skilful the angling, as effectually to attract and fatally to ensnare the soul not conversant with, or suspicious of, his devices. It is but the old policy a thousand times over-"Command these stones that they be made bread." Oh, let us '*resist* the Devil, that he may flee from us!' But, beloved, has your Heavenly Father ever given you reason to distrust His providence, to doubt His love? You have often felt the pressure of need; it may be, the gnawings of hunger, the weight of trouble-has He not as often appeared for your relief? The temptation, perhaps, has been to set you upon debating the fact of your Divine sonship, and consequently to distrust your Divine Father; and thus doubting your filial relation to God, and calling in question the reality of your conversion to Christ, you have equally doubted God's paternal care of you. Satan, well knowing that he has shorn the locks of your strength, has lessened your moral power, and weakened the only and all-powerful motive to a loving, childlike reliance upon the providential care of your Heavenly Father, thus setting you upon the vain, God-dishonoring task of satisfying the gnawings of hunger by converting stones into bread!

But how are you to resist the temptation and foil the tempter? With the weapon wielded by your Lord-"The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." "But He answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." It is an interesting fact that the only *offensive* part of the Christian armor is the "Sword of the Spirit"-all other parts of the panoply are *defensive*. With this we are to oppose, and with this vanquish, our foe. Faith grasping the weapon-"It is written"-renders the soul invulnerable to the most flaming darts, and the weakest combatant invincible to the most subtle foe. We have nought to lean upon but the naked Word of God-nor want we more. Our blessed Lord summoned no angels to His rescue, neither did He draw upon the infinite resources of His Godhead-both He might have done. But, to teach His saints in all ages, and under all temptations, that by *the Word of God alone* they were to conquer, He met and repulsed every assault of Satan by the words, "It is written." Are we tempted to distrust the providence of God in a time of pressing need? Prompted by atheistical unbelief, are we resorting to unscriptural and unlawful means-commanding the stones that they be made bread? Oh, let us pause in our folly and sin, and fix the eye upon those Divine, magic words-"It is written." Dwell upon them for a moment. Are you in trouble? It is written-"Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Are you in want? It is written-"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Are we cast down with overwhelming care? It is written-"Be careful for nothing, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God." Are you painfully conscious of the power of indwelling sin? It is written-"Sin shall not have dominion over you." Are you assailed by the ungodly world? It is written-"In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Measuring the faithfulness of God by the inconstancy of man, are you tempted to believe that the Divine faithfulness and power and love of God will finally fail you? It is written-"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Are your sins many and as scarlet: your sense of guilt heavier than you can bear? It is written-"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin!" In a word-Are you in pressing need-wanting bread, pinched with hunger? It is written-"He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rock: bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure." Enough! It is written-"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." But, oh infinitely beyond the wants of the body are the needs of the soul! It is written-"Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God doth man

live." *This* is the bread by which we really live-Christ Jesus, the bread of life. "I am the bread of life" Oh, ye who are striving and toiling for the bread that perishes, remember the words of God-"Man doth not live by bread alone." *This* is not your life-this not your true bread. The body will resolve itself into its original element, and "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," will be its final condition; but the soul, immortal as its Sire, will live on through the endless cycles of eternity. For this, our present and future state, God has provided by the gift of His beloved Son-the bread that comes down from heaven, which gives life to the world. By this bread alone you really live! The soul has needs that God only can meet-hunger that Christ alone can supply-yearnings that eternity alone can compass. Oh, starve not your soul for the body-rob not your higher, nobler, and more enduring nature to meet the appetites and demands of a nature fleeting, transient, and perishing, and which soon will perish! It is written-"What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Oh, feed not your soul on ashes; turn from the husks of worldly wealth, carnal delight, human ambition, political place and power,-and heed the wants, and respond to the claims, and satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the soul-destined to live in Heaven or Hell *for ever!* "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God doth man live." Bend your ear to His gracious but most solemn words-"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Lord! evermore give me this bread.

"Bread of Heaven! on Thee I feed,
 For Thy flesh is meat indeed!
 Evermore my soul be fed
 With this true and living Bread!
 Day by day with strength supplied
 Through the life of Him who died.

"Vine of Heaven! Thy blood supplies
 This vast cup of sacrifice.
 'Tis Thy wounds my healing give;
 To Thy cross I look and live.
 Thou my life! oh let me be
 Rooted, grafted, built on Thee!"

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

3. CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN TEMPTED TO SELF-DESTRUCTION.

"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If You be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning You; and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord thy God."-Matt. iv. 5-7.

This, doubtless, was the most crucial of our dear Lord's temptations. The imagination can scarcely picture to itself an assault more revolting to the feelings of Christ, or a temptation of the Christian more dishonoring to God, than this solicitation of the Devil to the impious act of *self-destruction!* Life is a precious, solemn, and responsible thing. The love of life, or, the law of self-preservation, is a divinely-implemented principle of our nature. It is not only an instinct common to the animal creation, but it constitutes one of the noblest and holiest canons of humanity. "*You shall love thy neighbor as thyself,*" defines this divine law of proper self-love, which is none other than the natural law of self-preservation God has most wisely and beneficently instituted. We are fallen and depraved; and it is not the least evidence and result of our sinfulness the low estimate men in general form of the value, necessity, and preciousness of *life*. We "thank God for our creation;" but, in many instances, the very beings from whose lips the heartless acknowledgment has breathed regard life, and sport with life, and waste life, as though there were not attached to it a reality, responsibility, and an account of the most vital, solemn, and tremendous nature!

Far different was the case with our Lord, Himself essential Life, and the Fountain and Giver of life to all sentient beings. Possessing a Life-as the Savior of the race-which was to redeem countless millions, can we imagine a temptation of the Devil from which His whole being would more wholly and indignantly recoil, than that couched in the words of the tempter, as, standing upon the pinnacle of the Temple, he exclaimed-"Cast Thyself down"? To have brought his battery thus to bear upon the very life of Christ-to prompt Him to fling from Him, by a self-destroying hand, that life upon which hung interests more precious, solemn, and deathless than countless worlds, was a master-stroke of the arch-foe of God and man. True, that life was to pass away-that life was to be sacrificed-but under other and far different circumstances, and by a will and a hand other than His own. That life received of His Father-"For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself"-was to be offered on the cross as a sacrifice and atonement to the moral government of God for the sins of His

elect Church. But, neither the fullness of time or the crucial mode of self-sacrifice of His life had yet come; and Satan's attempt to anticipate it was one of the fiercest darts selected from his quiver.

It is instructing to remark that the first temptation presented to our Lord was to *distrust* Divine providence; the second was to *presume* upon it. And thus these two extremes-*distrust* and *presumption*-are frequently weapons by which Satan assails the children of God-the one, the weapon of *despair*; the other, the weapon of *unlawfulness*. The subject of the present chapter is peculiarly difficult and painful, unfolding a most trying temptation of Satan often presented to the Christian, and not unfrequently with success; but, difficult and painful as it is, its discussion is necessary, and, in some instances, with the Divine blessing, may be found timely and profitable. As we are considering the temptations of Christ and those of the Christian in some of their essential features as identical, let us glance at two or three of the particulars of the present one. The *scene* of this temptation of Christ is suggestive: "Then the Devil takes Him up into the Holy City, *and set Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple.*" We are left to conjecture by what influence the Devil thus transported the Son of God; but we are not equally left in ignorance as to the power which the Devil is sometimes permitted to exert over the objects of God's love and care.

There is no place and no occasion in the Christian life which may not become the theatre of Satan's assaults. On the last occasion he presented his temptation to Christ in the depth of the lone and far-off wilderness, with no human sound to break its profound solitude. But here his tactics are changed. The scene of his temptation is not the solitude of the desert, *but the pinnacle of the Temple*. Be the scene of temptation the privacy of the chamber or the publicity of the city, Satan is equally at home in plying his wily arts and in accomplishing his dark designs. No place is too hallowed! The Holy City-the sacred Temple-are often his most favourite and successful places of attack. The pinnacle of the Temple, in its sacred and sublime elevation, is a chosen position of the tempter, but a dangerous one for the Christian; for the greater the height, the more conspicuous and tremendous the fall! It is here we need the most strength and the most sleepless vigilance. Young Christians-not to speak of more advanced believers-are often ambitious of a high position in the world and in the Church. We naturally love to climb. Seeking great things for ourselves, place and power, wealth and distinction, are pleasant and attractive objects with which Satan loves to bait his hook. They tempt us to mount, little thinking that Satan is aiding our ascent, more desirous even than we ourselves are of reaching such an altitude as will render our downfall more easy and more dire. There are but few Christians who can bear the exaltation to which our common humanity so ardently

aspires. The head turns giddy, reason is unhinged, and we become self-inflated; and from our sublime elevation-the pinnacle on which we stand, "the observed of all observers,"-we may fall, the depth of which can only be measured by the elevation from which we were plunged. "Seek you great things for thyself? Seek them not." Keep on lowly ground; the humble only are safe.

"He that is down need fear no fall."

It is one thing for God to place us upon a pinnacle of the Temple, it is quite another thing for Satan! Is it a fact, my reader, that your elevation in the Christian Church has proved promotive of your spiritual and personal religion? Is sin more abominable-self more loathed-holiness more thirsted for-the world more scorned-the power of the world to come more absorbing-and Christ more admired and precious? Alas! it may be far otherwise. For elevation to dignity and power is a trying position for a man of God. Few can pass through the fiery ordeal and remain unscathed. In the same proportion to the pinnacle elevation of the Christian, the foundation becomes more flimsy, the standing more insecure, and the drop more certain and more fatal.

"Line o'er line,
Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still and nearer
To the blue heavens"-
rises the uplifted and inflated soul, until from the pinnacle of its dizzy altitude it topples to the earth; and great is the fall thereof! A thousand times, O Lord, would I rather be a doorkeeper in Thy house than stand upon its most towering pinnacle.

Once more the Divine Sonship of our Lord is assailed: "If You be the Son of God," or, as it is in the Greek, "Seeing You art the Son of God." We repeat the fact that demons never denied the Godhead of Christ, but invariably and unhesitatingly acknowledged it, and did it homage. It was left for man, in his depravity and arrogance, to ignore and scorn a doctrine which the devils believed, and at which they trembled! In this particular the temptation of Christ and that of the Christian are remarkably coincident. Satan's first great step in promoting his dark design is to call our personal Christianity in question. He will set us upon the task of debating our Divine adoption, and consequently denying our sonship. He will engender doubts respecting the reality of our conversion, and suggest to the mind that all our past religious experience has been but a delusion, our Christian profession hypocrisy, and that with all our shining gifts, zealous service, and prominent position in the Church of God we have in reality no part or lot in the matter. And the

moment he has succeeded in foisting upon us the idea of self-deception, he has opened an easy avenue to the temptation of self-destruction! Oh, heed not, believer, the suicidal voice of this Evil One! Were you really self-deceived and deceiving-were you still in an unconverted and unrenewed state, would he, think you, set you upon the work of doubting your spiritual state-of questioning the genuineness of your conversion? Would it not rather be his policy to rock the cradle of your false hope, and ply you with yet deeper draughts of the narcotic which had so long promoted your profound and fatal insensibility-thus fostering the belief that you were saved, well knowing that you were lost? If Satan was compelled by the force of a conviction he could not resist to acknowledge the Divine Sonship of Christ, his device, on the other hand, is to throw a doubt upon ours, and thus, by admitting the one and denying the other, he aims to accomplish his subtle and hellish purposes.

"Cast Thyself down from hence." Such was the temptation presented by the Devil to our Lord-the temptation to *lay violent hands upon His own life!* What must have been the horror-what the profound sense of the tempter's satanic malignity and arrogance-awakened in Christ's mind by the bare suggestion of *self-destruction!* His holy soul must have shuddered at the very thought! By suicidal hands to rid Himself of a life given to Him of His Father-a life upon the existence and the eventual sacrifice of which the lives of countless myriads of the race hung, must have been a crime, the blackness and enormity of whose guilt could only have been measured by His own infinite and holy mind.

It was no little aggravation of this temptation to self-destruction that it should have been suggested as *presuming* upon the Divine care. "For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Thy foot against a stone." Here was the appalling act of *self-destruction* suggested, strengthened, and encouraged by a presumed reliance upon the promise and power of God to frustrate or prevent it-God thus made a party to one of the saddest and most unnatural afflictions to which humanity can be subjected. How fluently-though always to pervert it-can Satan quote the Word of God! It is not always safe to follow Scripture as quoted by the mouth of bad men. Neither is it more safe to be influenced in our actions by vague Scriptural texts and impressions conceived by our own mind, and yielded to by our own treacherous hearts.

But this temptation to *self-murder* is common to God's people; and in this we trace a striking identity of Christ's temptation and the Christian's; and so unseals another spring of sympathy flowing from the union of the Lord's

tempted ones with their tempted Lord Himself. "Cast thyself down-destroy thyself-ease you of thy pain of body-get rid of thy despondency of mind-thy spiritual doubts and fears-thy trouble, responsibility, and wants." Such is the temptation and such the reasoning by which many Christians are assailed. That there should exist the fact that in some instances the temptation has proved but too successful, is one of those dark events in the providence of God the mystery of which will all be explained in another and brighter world, when what we know not now we shall know then, and all to the eternal glory of His great Name. Such a calamity-assuming the case to be that of a child of God-is not without its peculiar alleviation and instruction. It is a truth which no reasoning can controvert, that the life thus self-sacrificed touches not upon the spiritual life that is hid with Christ in God. And, moreover, that as no Christian under the control of reason, and possessing a healthy mind, and walking in the light of the Lord, would thus voluntarily and rashly anticipate death in one of its most repulsive and appalling forms, the inference is logically and philosophically sound, as it is Scripturally and consistently true, that as no moral responsibility attaches to the act, the spiritual and eternal state of the soul remains undisturbed, and the soul is safe. The ascent to heaven was, indeed, like Elijah's, with a "whirlwind and in a chariot of fire;" but, like Solomon's chariot, it was "paved with love;" and thus proves Christ's permitted mode of conveying to Himself the soul redeemed with His own most precious blood. A mystery, dark and inscrutable, envelops the appalling event: why God should permit a child of the light to pass into eternity under a cloud so dark and by a mode so awful, is a problem of His moral government the solution of which must alone be found in that infinite wisdom that can make no mistake, in that perfect righteousness that cannot be unjust, and that Divine love that knows no change. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." "Verily You art a God that hides Thyself." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is this, my reader, the dark sorrow that bows you to the earth? "Be still and now that I am God," is the Divine voice to which now you must bend your ear. No comfort will accrue from an attempt to trace the cause of an event so awful, or to find a clue to a mystery so solemn and profound. "Thy will be done!" must be the calm, patient, and submissive language of thy soul. In this holy quietness and confidence thy repose and strength will be found.

The class of pious individuals to whom this temptation is presented is a large and a touching one. The suicidal propensities of a mind passing through a partial eclipse are often powerful and irresistible. Hundreds of God's people thus tempted through physical suffering, mental despondency, and religious melancholy, are patent to all whose especial and benevolent mission calls them to minister to a mind diseased. The temptation by which our Lord was assailed is reproduced in the persons and experience of many of His saints-

"Cast thyself down from hence." Shall we attempt a portrait of your case, my reader? It is, perhaps, *physical*. Disease has taken a strong hold upon your system; the body is tortured with suffering, the nerves quiver with agony-sleep is a stranger to your pillow-and, "Cast thyself down from hence," is the horrible impulse that haunts you. Or your case is *mental*. Trouble and anxiety, embarrassment and want, bow thy spirit to the dust-"Cast thyself down from hence," whispers the wily serpent in your ear. Or, your despondency is *spiritual*. Assailed by doubts and fears touching the state of your soul, you begin to question the reality of your conversion; and, thinking that your soul is lost, the tempter suggests an easy but a terrible solution of all your religious difficulties-"Cast thyself down from hence: He has given His angels charge over you."

But, my reader, listen to reason-listen to conscience-listen to God! "Do thyself no harm," is the tender, imploring voice of each. Christ the tempted One-assailed by this very tempter and by this very temptation, and who by the Word of God resisted and overcame-is all-sufficient in His love and power, grace and intercession for you; and looking to Him will assuredly give you the victory. "I have prayed for you that thy faith fail not," were the words addressed to one-and now equally addressed to you-whose grace, like yours, was sifted as wheat, and whose faith, like yours, was tried as by fire. "He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God: and I will write upon him my new Name." "Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." "Why art you cast down, O my soul? and why art you disquieted within you? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

If, my reader, you are haunted by the dark temptation of self-destruction, sit down, and as a Christian calmly and dispassionately reason the matter with yourself. Mind and faith have not entirely abandoned you; and, with prayer for Divine help, summon these to your aid in battling with and resisting the temptation; and consider the *grounds* you have for closing your ear to the tempter's voice, and resisting an insinuation so base, a crime so terrific.

Think, in the first place, *what a sin* the act would involve. Calmly and deliberately to fling away a life God has given you for your enjoyment and His glory-to cast it, as it were, in His face as a worthless thing-what language can describe the turpitude of guilt of such an act? Consider, too, the base *ingratitude* to your Maker the sin would express. You have often in the sanctuary, and with audible voice, "thanked God for your creation." Equally have you reason to thank Him for its *preservation*. Through how

many dangers, seen and unseen, from infancy to manhood,-your life has been preserved, times without number redeemed from destruction the most eminent! And now, by a deliberate and willful violation of the law of self-preservation God has implanted in your nature, to take that life away, how base the ingratitude! how dark the crime! Reflect, too, how important and precious your life is to those whose very existence seems bound up in yours; and who, under God, depend upon your industry and toil, your influence and care, for their daily sustenance. Think of the conjugal, parental, or filial tie thus ruthlessly and painfully severed, and imagine, if you can, the terrible result! A still more powerful dissuasive grows out of the dishonor and check such an act would bring upon the religion of God-the name of Christ-the interests of the Gospel and the progress of the Christian Church. What a triumph of Satan-what a weapon for the infidel-what an argument for the ungodly! Think of the *great things* the Lord has done for you-the Lord that died for you on the cross, and that now intercedes for you before the throne. Resist then, oh resist, this dark temptation of the Evil One: implore strength from God-seek grace from the all-sufficiency of Christ-and invoke the aid, comfort, and power of the Holy Spirit. And at every whisper of the enemy-"Cast thyself down"-send up to God in Christ the fervent, believing, importunate prayer-"*Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.*"

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

4. CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN TEMPTED TO FALSE AND IDOLATROUS WORSHIP.

"Again, the Devil takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give You, if You wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall you serve."- Matt. iv. 8-10.

The most barbed and potent shaft in Satan's quiver was reserved for the last and final throw: the most arrogant and blasphemous onslaught for the closing scene of the temptation, and for the most signal discomfiture of the Tempter. The combined ingenuity of hell could not possibly have invented, or its hottest furnace have forged, a weapon more profane, venomous, and offensive-*the Son of God incited to do homage and worship to the Devil!* "Fall down and worship me." How must His holy soul have shuddered, and His loyal feelings have recoiled, at the bare thought! The proposal was the very height of blasphemy! But turn we now from the tempted Christ to the tempted Christian.

Conceding that there may exist but little, if any, danger of a reproduction in the experience of the believer of the same gross, profane, and appalling temptation, yet, transforming himself into an angel of light-as is his subtle and insidious mode-may not Satan approach us in a form so fascinating and disguised, with language so insinuating and arguments so plausible as to seduce us into a species of false and idolatrous worship, scarcely less impious, dishonoring, and offensive to God? All spurious and superstitious worship-whatever its object or its mode-is an indirect acknowledgment of, and a Divine homage paid to, the authority and power of Satan. Little do those who, professing and calling themselves Christians and Protestants, reflect that in so doing, they are indirectly "*sacrificing to devils* and not to God." Let us direct our attention to some of those unlawful and idolatrous objects and modes of worship which are not less offensive to God than was Satan's suggestion to Christ-"Fall down and worship me."

Of all the sins common to our fallen nature, God has the most signally marked that of Idolatry, or False Worship. The reason of this is obvious. Other sins may aim at some one perfection of His Being-*this* aims at His very Being itself: it is the worst species of Atheism; for while in name it acknowledges, in worship it denies Him. It were far less a crime to assert that there is *no* God, than, while in theory acknowledging, in practice we ignore Him. It is more than a mere negation of His existence; it is a positive

insult and dishonor done to His Great and Holy Name.

Man is by nature an *idolater*. The Fall having diverted the mind from God, it seeks some object of worship other than God only. The renewed man is not entirely exempt from this sin. Hence the exhortation of the Apostle addressed to the early Christians, and in these last days addressed to us: "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols,*" "*My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*" Surely, it was not the gross and senseless idolatry of the heathens to which the Apostles thus refer; from this many of those saints to whom they wrote had already been delivered; but to other idols and other worship, less palpable and degrading, but not less superstitious or offensive to God. Let us specify a few.

How much has Satan to do in promoting *the idolatry of self*, by which the Christian is so much and so severely tempted! The worship of self-or self-righteousness-is a natural and fearful form of idolatry. It is an innate and never entirely eradicated principle of our nature, but clings to us to the very last of life. Alas! the holiest and the best of us want to be something, and to do something, when in reality we are *nothing*, and can *do* nothing. "Though I be nothing," was the noble confession of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. We walk in our religious life, for the most part, upon *stilts*-always appearing in the eyes of others *taller* than we really are! If God condescends to make us of use in His service-if the Holy Spirit employs us as instruments in conversion, instruction, or comfort to souls,-or, if He adorns us with some eminent spiritual gift or grace-Satan is at one elbow suggesting to self to put in its claim to some share of praise, dividing the honor and glory with God. What is this idolatry of self but the old temptation-"Fall down and worship me"? But real greatness and true humility have ever been in alliance with entire abnegation of self. Listen to John, the forerunner of Christ-"Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Listen to Paul, the great Apostle-"Less than the least of all saints, sinners of whom I am chief." Transcending all examples of self-abnegation and humility, behold the Lamb of God! Who can worship at the manger of Bethlehem-who can behold the Incarnate God making Himself of no reputation, and taking upon Him the form of a servant-who can see Him stooping to bathe the disciples' feet-who can sit at His feet and hear the marvelous words as they fall from His lips, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart"-who can stand before the cross and gaze upon the Creator of all worlds impaled between two malefactors, Himself dying as the chief,-and not shrink into his own nothingness, bewailing that he should ever have been betrayed into the folly and the sin of burning the incense of idolatry before the wretched idol-self! My soul! beware of self-idolatry-the most insidious, hateful, and degrading form of idolism to which the soul can be subjected. It is but the old temptation in another and more subtle shape-

the little, contemptible idol self-echoing the cursed language of Satan- "*Fall down and worship me.*" If, through any good thing wrought, you merit human approbation, "*let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*" And when thus praised, let the reflection crimson our cheek that, did the eulogist know us as God does, or as we know ourselves, censure and not applause, condemnation and not approval, would be our just reward. "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Oh, that the weapon wielded by our Lord with such crushing effect may conquer and overcome this self-idolatry in us!- "*You shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall you serve.*"

Human intellect is a popular and powerful idol, and clusters around its attractive shrine countless admiring and ardent worshippers. To the undue place and power awarded to Human Reason in matters of religious faith, must be ascribed much of the infidelity of the age. Intellect, in the creed of many, is but a synonym of Rationalism,-substituting a speculative interpretation and intellectual reception of Revelation for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the experience of the heart, and that reverential and devout submission of faith which God's Word demands. To this cause we trace much of the loose views of Inspiration-tampering with the Atonement and Sacrifice of Christ-speculative and erroneous theories touching the final condition of the lost-the eternity of future suffering, and the natural immortality of the soul dogmatically and unblushingly denied-with which, alas! the pulpit and the press are so rife. We pen not a sentence tending to narrow the province of Reason in matters of faith. On the contrary, we are prepared fully to maintain that Reason and Revelation, Science and Religion, are not divorced and antagonistic forces-as some suppose-but are-if we may be allowed the expression-*en-rapport*-in harmonious and continuous communication the one with the other; conspiring to lay their richest treasures at the feet of Revelation, and testifying, as with one voice, that God's Word is true! So far from ignoring the province and power of the intellectual faculty, we admit that Reason is the grandest gift with which man is endowed-the faculty which approximates the nearest to the Creator,- and that it is as much the duty of Reason to study, examine, and sift the truth of the Bible and the evidences of Christianity, as it is the duty and the privilege of Faith humbly and unquestioningly to receive them. Our simple object is to guard the reader against the undue exaltation and supremacy of the intellectual powers, a fertile cause of much of the prevailing atheism and semi-skepticism of the day: exhibited either in a covert tampering with the

inspiration of the Bible, or in the unblushing and avowed rejection of Revelation altogether.

The idolatrous pride of *intellect!* Alas! in how many melancholy instances has it resulted in the sad abandonment by the imperious idol of its too ardent worshipper! The words of the prophet, addressed to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, concerning his idolatry, have found a singular and melancholy application in many instances to the idolatrous devotee of the human mind- "*Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast you off!*" The god you did worship so devoutly-in whose power you did confide so implicitly-has disowned and forsaken you-"has cast you off"-scorning the worship and despising the worshipper. Let the melancholy history of many a mental wreck testify! The over-wrought brain has become plastic-its unnatural tension of study and thought has disturbed the mental balance; and the mind that was enthroned so firmly and so proudly-that shone in the realm of literature so brilliantly-and gave promise of attaining to the loftiest eminence of ambition so hopefully-has become a ruin and a blank! "*Thy god, O Samaria, has cast you off.*" Alas! the wise man gloried in his superior wisdom-the intellectual man prided himself of his brilliant intellect-the wrangler plumed himself of his high scholarship-and the scientist boasted of his great discoveries-and in a moment God-who will not give His glory to another-has smitten the idol to the dust! It was but a drop of blood mounting to the brain-a sunbeam falling upon its surface-and the intellect collapsed, and the mind passed into the dark eclipse of driveling idiocy, or, into the still darker night of moody madness! Oh, that men would employ their vast intellectual endowments, their rich mental acquisitions, for the good of their fellows, and the glory of Him at whose tribunal they are to render an account of their talents, be it the one or the ten! We can scarcely portray or even imagine a spectacle more appalling than that of an intellect of rare power, a gifted mind highly cultivated and richly stored, passing from the scene of its probation to that of its account, with no 'gain' to present-no 'account' to deliver-as the fruit of its gigantic powers, prolonged existence, and tremendous responsibility, save the brilliant history-the sentimental fiction-the vapid story-the frivolous song-or, perhaps, the sad memorials of an atheistic and infidel philosophy! Shades of Macaulay, Scott, and Byron! of Dickens, Thackeray, and Mills!- vanished stars from the republic of letters-where have ye left the glory of your great powers, and what their solemn record and reward?

But is the *Christian* student entirely invulnerable to this temptation-indirectly presented by the Evil One-of falling down before the idol Intellect? We trow not. Are there not in our universities, our schools of science, and along the various professional walks of life, those with the sacred office of the Christian ministry in view, or are actively engaged in the

discharge of its sacred functions—who yet are too ardent devotees-idolaters, in truth-of human intellect?-the learning, philosophy, and science of this world filling the entire vision of the soul, to the total exclusion of more weighty matters—"the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." Candidates for the holy ministry have great reason to guard against this species of idolatry. It has not been untruly remarked that in our Universities Christ has often been crucified between the Classics and Mathematics. The fascination of abstract study—the absorbing power of human science—has exerted a deteriorating influence upon the spiritual interests of the soul; and the aspirants for the most solemn office a mortal can fill, emerge from the academical shades but imperfectly, if at all, prepared to enter upon a work the Great Apostle has in these words so distinctly and emphatically described—"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Whenever man's judgment is made the sole interpreter of the Bible, and human learning and scientific research are substituted for the Divine illumination and experimental teaching of the Holy Spirit, God is dishonored—the Bible is a sealed book—and the mind, in its search for truth, is left to grope its way amid the shadows of ignorance, the rocks of error, and the quicksands of sin. Oh, let us, then, be solemnly aware of the idolatry of Intellect! "Fall down and worship me," is its constant and ensnaring challenge. How many, carried away with the erudition of the schools, and even the eloquence of the pulpit—giving themselves too exclusively and absorbingly to the pursuit of intellectual studies, and swayed in their religious opinions by the authority of master-minds and commanding rhetoric, have sacrificed themselves at the shrine of their idol!

Author of my being! Giver and Sustainer of my mind! renew, sanctify, and guide my intellectual powers. And, as You did create them for Thyself, and dost hold me responsible for their possession and accountable for their use, vouchsafe me grace to employ them for the best good of my fellows, and the highest glory and honour of Thy Great Name!

The idolatry of wealth forms another, a more sensual and degrading species of temptation brought to bear upon our fallen humanity by the great enemy of souls. The love for wealth is as strong and absorbing as it is fascinating and universal. Its thirst is, to the covetous worldling, what the desire for strong drink is to the inveterate inebriate—the one all-consuming passion—the ruling demon of the soul. And, as in the case of the drunkard, the more the passion is fed, the more fiercely—and, to all human appearance,

unquenchably-the flame burns,-so the more devoutly the idol wealth is worshipped, the more imperious is its sway, and the more insatiable its demand. It is the natural, but singular, effect of great and unsanctified wealth that it freezes the finest currents, and corrodes the loveliest sentiments of the soul-engendering parsimony and inspiring covetousness: and the more successful the effort to acquire it, the more intense grows the desire of its accumulation,-it is the *curse* of affluence, *unblessed* of God! Nor is this all. "*The love of money*"-records the inspired Apostle-"*is the root of all evil.*" To this corrupt principle-"the *love* of money"-and to this unappeased hankering-the anxiety for its possession-may be traced-as a natural and fertile cause-that low standard of commercial morality which, alas! has found so many startling and humiliating examples in this and in other lands: examples of misplaced confidence-heartless fraud, enormous defalcation-and reckless speculation,-tarnishing many an escutcheon, dishonoring many a home, and breaking many a heart! How many a merchant-prince, who stood upon the highest eminence of commercial distinction, honor and affluence, have not hesitated, sacrificing integrity, character, and fortune upon the altar of their favorite god, around whose altar lie scattered the wrecks of many a fair name-happy home, princely fortune-and the hope of another and a better world. How emphatically and solemnly is the truth of the Bible verified day by day: "*They that will be rich fall into divers temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men's souls in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil.*" Oh, beware of the idolatry of money! "*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" Unsanctified by the love of God and the grace of Christ, they create penury, engender meanness, strengthen selfishness, destroy natural affection, and take the place of God! That wealth is a *power*-and, when sanctified and guided by God, a mighty power-who can doubt? Oh, if the rich but recognized more solemnly the responsibility of its possession, the luxury of its dispersion, and the blessing of its reflex influence-blessing him that receives, still more him that gives-would there not be less hoarding and more scattering! less selfishness and more of that expansive sympathy which He displayed, of whom it is written-"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." Pause not at admiration, but aspire to emulate this meritorious and illustrious Pattern of self-sacrifice and wondrous compassion. Study your Model closely. Dwell upon the countless riches He abjured and the abject poverty which He assumed-*all for you!* Blush, as you stand before this Divine-Human Statue, that you are so imperfect a reflection of its beauty. Remember, O Christian, that you are God's purse-bearer-the King's almoner-the Church's treasurer; and that, as Christ's steward, and not a proprietor-as God's trustee, and not an owner;- for the ten, the five, and the one talent confided to your trading, ere long you

must render an account to your Lord. Give of your abundance to assist Christ's cause, which may languish; relieve the need of some saint who may be necessitous; lighten the burden of some hard-working servant of Christ, bowed beneath its weight and ready to sink; light up with sunshine some desolate heart pining in the cold shade of anxiety, loneliness, and want. Oh, learn the happy secret of *preserving* riches by their liberal *dispersion*; clip their pinions by a little seasonable charity, lest they take wing and fly away! Remember that, "there is that scatters and yet increases, and there is that with holds more than is meet, and it tends to poverty." God's word is *true!* and sooner or later we shall find it so. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." With a precept so holy, and a promise so precious, what true Christian will not turn a deaf ear to all those specious allurements to immediate and great wealth with which the apostles and priests of Mammon seek to beguile and ruin the unsuspecting and covetous? O Christ, my Master! give me grace to write "Holiness to the Lord" upon all I am and all I have; remembering that not my own, but "*of Thine have I given You.*"

"We give You but Thine own,
Whatever the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from You.

"May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as You givest us,
To You our first-fruits give.

"To comfort and to bless
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless,
Is angels' work below.

"The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace-
It is a Christ-like thing.

"And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be;
Whatever for Thine we do, O Lord,

We do it unto You."

Creature idolatry takes its place among the many forms of temptation to which the Christian is exposed. It is true our blessed Lord was not thus tempted, for His love and friendship were pure from all idolatry and sin; notwithstanding, He not the less measures out grace for, and exercises sympathy with, all those who, through the depth and exuberance of human affection, are enamored of its idol, and are thus exposed to its idolatry. The heart is as much the creature of God as the mind; human love as much a Divine inspiration as human thought. And as God hates nothing that He has made, we may infer that the proper development and legitimate exercise of the affections cannot be displeasing in His sight. "God is love," and God is the Inspirer of love, and the source of all the blessings which flow through its channel. He has made love-*His own love*-the pivot upon which all His Perfections revolve. Its greatness and grandeur, culminating at the Cross, blends in the sweetest and most perfect harmony all His moral attributes, moulding them into a resplendent bow which encircles the throne upon which He sits-the bow of His covenant salvation, "round about the throne." "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." This being so,-God's love electing us to salvation, and sacrificing His beloved Son to accomplish it, forming those sacred relations of life which are centers of its existence and channels of its flow,-surely they err who say it is a sin to love, and to love to the utmost capacity of loving! But the sin and danger lie-not in loving-but in such an inordinate and supreme surrender of the affections as to transform their object into an idol and their love into idolatry. But God, who is love, demands the supreme, the undivided heart. Does He then frown upon human affection in its natural and sacred outflow? Would He still a single throb of those sacred and precious relations of life He Himself has formed? So far from this, He has selected earthly love as an emblem of the Heavenly, and human relations as types of the Divine. God's relation to us is *Parental*: Christ's love to us is *Conjugal*: His friendship *Filial*. Who can study the safeguards God has thrown around the different relations of life-especially the Domestic Constitution-the sanctity, obligations, and blessings He has attached to each-and not be profoundly impressed with the idea of God's high estimate of human affection? But it is here we need the most unslumbering vigilance and the most unceasing prayer-vigilance, lest our affections should become inordinate and idolatrous; and prayer, that Divine grace may control, and the Holy Spirit sanctify, the relations God has formed and the love He has inspired. The earthly idols of the heart-whatever the idol be-God will and must 'abolish.' If it is the *intellect*-He veils it; if *wealth*-He removes it; if *health*-He blows upon it; if the *creature*-He recalls it! We often wonder at the mysterious event that breaks the strong and beautiful staff-that nips the

young flower in the bud-that removes from our fond gaze the fully developed object of loveliness and love. "*You shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only,*" explains the mystery! A fond mother had an only and adored child, which she never allowed out of her sight, or for a moment entrusted to the care of another. She forgot that Christ took especial and loving care of little children, and would not confide it to His care. Sitting by her side at an open window, on one occasion, in an unguarded moment her little one sprang from her arms, and falling from a fearful height, instantly perished!-so appallingly was her idol smitten, so signally was her idolatry marked, and so affectingly was the sin of her distrust of God righteously, yet lovingly, corrected! And why this discipline of our earthly loves?-why this chastening of our human affections? The answer again returns-"*You shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only.*" Oh, that God may be the supreme Object of our love! Oh, that Christ may hold His right and rightful place in our hearts! Who so loving as God? Who so lovely as Jesus? He has but imperfectly studied the subtlety and sounded the depths of the human heart, who is not thoroughly convinced of the dangers which attach to its affections; and the holy discipline and vigilance those affections need!

"The brightest things below the sky
Give but a flattering light;
We should suspect some danger nigh
Where we possess delight.

"Our dearest joys and nearest friends,
The partners of our blood,
How they divide our wavering minds,
And leave but half for God!

"The fondness of a creature's love,
How strong it strikes the sense!
Thither the warm affections move,
Nor can we call them thence.

"Dear Savior! let Thy beauties be
My soul's eternal food;
And grace command my heart away
From all created good."

False, or idolatrous, religious worship is, perhaps, the most prevalent and ensnaring form of idolatry, but, important as this illustration of our subject is- especially at the present time-the limits of this chapter allow but a brief

illusion. Upon how many professedly religious altars in the present day the Athenian inscription, "To the Unknown God,"-may be inscribed. The temple in which they stand, the ritual which they observe, the homage they present, is essentially mediaeval in its appointments, and superstitious and idolatrous in its worship. "Fall down and worship me," is the voice rising from that 'high altar,' and resounding through those gloomy aisles. *"Hear the word of the Lord,"* oh, ye idolatrous worshippers-*"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? . . . When ye come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; . . . the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; . . . I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."* My soul! beware of false and idolatrous worship! Ponder often and devoutly the weighty and solemn words of thy Lord: *"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."* Cherish the profoundest sincerity, observe the sternest simplicity, and cultivate the highest spirituality in all thine approaches to God-public, social, private. There is but *one* Being in the universe before whom you can offer the undivided love of your heart, the profoundest homage of your mind, the deepest devotion of your soul-yea, before whom you can prostrate your *whole being*-it is that great God who has said-"You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and whose own unparalleled love to us is thus expressed-"God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Oh, let this truth be engraved, as in marble, on the tablet of your memory-let it be written, as with a sunbeam, on the consciousness of your daily life-that God looks only at the heart, and that, where that heart offers to Him its pure incense of love, prayer and praise, every forest is a cathedral, every home a sanctuary, every spot an altar, and every worshipper a priest! Let us, when tempted, as was our Lord, to false and idolatrous worship, repel the dart and foil the Archer with Christ's invulnerable weapon-"It is written, You shall worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall you serve."

"Is there a thing beneath the sun,
That strives with You my heart to share?
Take it away, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!"

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

5. CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN TEMPTED WITH WORLDLY GRANDEUR AND POSSESSION.

"Again, the Devil takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give You, if You wilt fall down and worship me."-Matt. iv.8, 9.

From the temptation of our Lord to idolatrous worship, we pass to the *argument* by which it was urged. The argument was as insinuating as the proposal was base, and both illustrated the deep subtlety of the enemy, and established his claim to the title our Lord had given him as, "a liar from the beginning." The reward of Satanic homage thus held out to the eye of Christ was that of empire; in other words, the glory and sovereignty of the world. "Again, he takes Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give You, if You wilt fall down and worship me." It is impossible for the observant mind not to remark the genius and pertinacity of the Devil, the study of which cannot fail to be deeply instructive to those who, assailed by a like temptation, should not be ignorant of his devices.

Finding that neither privacy nor publicity-the solitude of the wilderness or the elevation of the Temple-were successful in the accomplishment of his dark and ignoble designs, the Enemy changed his tactics, and by some extraordinary power-the nature of which we are left to conjecture-led Christ from the pinnacle to the mountain, and set Him thereon. Which of the many "mountains round about Jerusalem" he selected for his purpose does not appear; nor is it of moment, since in all probability, had it been specified, it would have become, as was the brazen serpent which Moses erected in the wilderness, an object of blasphemous deification and superstitious worship. Suffice it to say that, doubtless, from its great elevation, it commanded a landscape view of the whole land of Palestine, of the most enchanting description, and with all its hallowed associations-embracing in its wide range the vine-clad hills of Judea-the spicy mountains of Arabia-the vast country of Gilead-the fertile plains of Moab-the river of Jordan, and the entire extent of the Red Sea. What a scenery of surpassing beauty-what kingdoms of undying glory-what events of historic interest-what hallowed associations and precious memories would in a moment of time burst upon the eye and unveil their grandeur to the mind of our blessed Lord! "All these things will I give You, if You wilt fall down and worship me!" In this proffer of dominion and wealth, as the price of Christ's prostration of His soul at the feet of Satan-this attempted achievement of his infernal sovereignty over the inner being of our Lord-several things are singularly

and instructively involved. The first was the attempt to subordinate the spiritual to the material-the union of the homage of the inner man with the grandeur, pomp, and circumstance of the outer world; in other words-the possession of human power, earthly glory, and worldly wealth, at the expense of conscience, principle, and the will and honor of God,-the noblest powers of the soul thus prostrate at the feet of the most degraded and tyrannous despot! Alas! does not the sad spectacle everywhere present itself of men acquiring worldly wealth, human distinction, and political power at the expense of the spiritual and eternal interests of the soul?-the high and noble powers of their being sacrificed at the altar of Mammon, or falling down before the 'golden image' of false greatness, religious skepticism, or superstitious worship, which the Nebuchadnezzar of this world has set up? "All these things will I give you, if you wilt fall down and worship me."

But a worse aspect of the subject presents itself. This temptation of our Lord-repeated every day in man's history-was not only an attempt to subordinate the spiritual to the material-worldly position, wealth, and power purchased at the sacrifice of great spiritual principles-but, what is more serious, it was a subordinating the Divine to the human. This has ever been one of Satan's most infernal designs and master-strokes of policy. Everywhere we see vigorously at work a species of practical atheism, the tendency and object of which are, to cast off God's will, to renounce His sovereignty and to ignore His truth-erecting an ecclesiastical system, dogmatic creed, and religious worship "above all that is called God, and that is worshipped," in direct contravention of His Word,-thus subordinating God's will to man's, Christ's righteousness to the creature, and revealed truth to human error-the intellect, conscience, and affections of the soul on their knees at the feet of Satan! What, we ask, is the idolatry of the mind, the adulation of the affections, the homage of wealth, and the glorification of self everywhere patent-but the old temptation-overcome by Christ, but overcoming man-"Fall down and worship me."

Another and scarcely less instructive feature of this temptation of worldly dominion to which our Lord was subjected, is the strong, withering light it throws upon the character of Satan as a cunning, insolent, and lying deceiver. He well knew that, when he offered all these kingdoms and the glory thereof to Christ as the bribe of His homage, the offer was made to Creation's God, and the World's Proprietor-and that of Christ's own was he giving Him! He could not have approached our Lord on a side more invulnerable, or with a bribe less potent. What influence could this appeal to ambition and avarice have upon Him who owned the world-who was about to die for the world-taking out of it a Church redeemed by and for Himself-and then destroying the casket when He had secured the jewel?

But, as we have observed, the temptation to worldly grandeur and possession presented to Christ, is daily repeated in the experience of the Christian. Satan has no more ready, potent, or successful instrument of assault upon the personal religion and Christian usefulness of the believer than *the world*. Failing, in the case of our Lord, to secure homage and worship by the presentation of worldly blandishments, he plies his arts with His followers, wounding the Lord in the person of His disciples. The world, that had no attraction for Christ-save only its redemption-alas! constitutes one of the most seductive temptations of the Christian. Satan is constantly presenting it in endless forms of attraction, wearing as many disguises, and backed by every species of argument. It is his craft to present only the bright side of the world, carefully concealing the darker and more repulsive one; the flower without the thorn-the picture without the shading-its emptiness and heartlessness-its selfishness and malice-its deceitfulness and malignity-its ingratitude and baseness-its hollow friendships and its false loves. Oh! these are the thorns and these the shadows the cunning Tempter conceals when he presents the world and the glory thereof in exchange for the homage and the worship he asks. There is not a ruse he does not employ by which to bring the world to bear upon the Christian. The eye delighting in beauty-the ear ravished with sounds-the taste delicate and dainty,-"The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life"-are so many *media* through which the attractive power and ascendancy of the world attain an easy conquest in the mind of the Christian.

We are told that Satan "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world *in a moment of time*." How rapid the movements of the Evil One! how soon-"in a moment of time"-can he draw the heart of the creature from Christ-the mind from devout meditation-and the whole soul from things that are divine, heavenly and eternal! There is no little cunning on the part of Satan in this rapidity of motion. The glory of the world is so flimsy-its pleasures so shallow-its promises so hollow-they will not admit of or allow a long survey. Satan will not leave time for reflection and prayer. Earthly things will not admit of inspection. Taking us off our guard-as "in a moment of time"-he unveils all the charms and attractions of the object to the mind, and says, "All these will I give you, if you wilt give up Christ-and religion-and heaven-and fall down and worship me." Oh, let us not be ignorant of his devices! Ere you are aware, he will present the temptation-the world-in some fascinating form, and in a moment you are spell-bound and ensnared! He will allow no time, no not a moment of calm consideration, due examination, and earnest prayer. The temptation is as rapid in its proposal as its possession is fleeting and its happiness unsubstantial! He is in too great a hurry to accomplish his purpose, to permit time for reflection. The favorable

moment may be past; the flood-tide may turn, and the golden opportunity be lost of prostrating your religious principles and Christian profession-intellect, affections, and conscience-at his feet. How suggestive and solemn the words-"He showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world *in a moment of time!*" In one moment of time, and by a single temptation, how great a loser may you be! Seduced by its power, convinced by its arguments, ensnared by its glitter, the world has enchained you a slave at its feet. Thus captivated and bound, you have compromised your religious principles, injured your Christian profession, done violence to your conscience, destroyed your peace, dishonored Christ, and sinned against God. Oh, who-calmly and thoughtfully-would bid so high for this poor world-purchasing its baubles and its friendship at so costly a price?

But let us not be misunderstood. We are not seeking to foster a supercilious contempt and ungrateful regard for the world. This would be most dishonoring to God. He has not created this world-fashioning it so wonderfully, endowing it so richly, and adorning it so beautifully-that we should be blind to its grandeur, indifferent to its enjoyments, and ungrateful for its blessings, flowing through a thousand channels. Far from this. If God does not despise the world-fallen and sinful though it is-why should we? It is said of the ungodly-"*Because they regard not the works of the Lord, and the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up.*" God has garnished this bright world with pleasant homes, hallowed it with sacred temples, and furnished it with countless mercies, all for the pleasure and enjoyment of the beings He made to people it. Spenser has thus beautifully embodied the idea:

"All the world by You at first was made,
And daily yet You dost the same repair;
Nor ought on earth that merry is and glad,
Nor ought on earth that lovely is and fair,
But You the same for pleasure did prepare."

The religion of Christ imposes not upon its disciples such atheistical indifference to, and reclusive isolation from, the world as would abandon its relations, ignore its duties, or even exempt us from its temptations and trials-"*For then must ye needs go out of the world.*" Monasticism is not an institution of the Gospel-the order of monks is no appointment of Christ; but both are in direct antagonism to the genius, spirit, and obligations of Christianity. What were the words of our Lord as embodied in His sublime intercessory prayer-"Father, I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. As You hast sent Me into the world, so have I sent them into the world." Christ has sent His people into the world,

not to model their lives according to its principles and religion, but to witness for Him, and with Him, that "the works thereof are evil." They are placed in the world as the school of their graces-as the theatre of their conflicts-as the field of their labors: the words of Him whom the world cast out and crucified ever ringing in their ears-"Ye are the light of the world-ye are the salt of the earth." And the prayer of every true-hearted disciple of Christ should be-"Lord, what wilt You have me to do? Here am I; send me-even *me!*"

"Make use of me, my God!
Let me not be forgot,
A broken vessel cast aside,
One whom You needest not.

"I am Thy creature, Lord,
And made by hands Divine;
And I am part, however mean,
Of this great world of Thine.

"You usest all Thy works,
The weakest things that be
Each has a service of its own,
For all things wait on You.

"You usest the high stars,
The tiny drops of dew,
The giant peak and little hill-
My God, oh use me too.

"All things do serve You here,
All creatures great and small
Make use of me-of *me*-my God!
The weakest of them all."

"All these things will I give you, if you wilt fall down and worship me."
Such is the *world's* echo of Satan's voice! No higher ambition has the world than the supreme homage of its slaves! What will it not promise as a bribe for their devotion and their worship? It says to the man of business-"Worship me, and I will give you wealth." To the scholar-"Worship me, and I will give you fame." To the politician-"Worship me, and I will give you place and power." To the lover of pleasure and the serf of sensuality-"Worship me, and I will give you happiness." To the heartbroken and

downcast-"Worship me, plunge into my pleasures and excitement, and I will give you peace and comfort." How simple and facile seems the concession! It is but a little thing-"Only worship me!" It was but to bend the knee to him for one moment that Satan asked the Son of God. The request granted, what mind could have calculated the issue involved in that simple and instantaneous act? All Heaven would have been robed in sackcloth, and all Hell would have shouted for joy!

It is in this artful, unsuspecting way the *world*-Satan's great weapon-approaches the Christian. It will not startle you-seeing you are a religious professor, a constant communicant, a disciple of Christ-by enforcing too hard or too conspicuous a compliance with its demand. No! Like the Despot by whom the world is governed, it is too wily and cautious to unmask its designs. It asks no great thing at your hand, as a recognition of its authority and as an expression of your homage. All that the world proposes is just a slight relaxing of Christian consistency-a little concession of puritanical strictness. "It is but a little thing," argues the world, "only a quiet hand at whist-a little innocent dance-an attractive theatrical-a popular opera-a harmless venture on the Turf; is it not a little one? Only bend the knee and do me homage." And thus this wicked, Christ-rejecting, God-ignoring world, travels the entire circle of humanity, offering as a bribe for its homage and its worship gifts it has none to bestow-rich in promises it never can fulfill. Oh, what a *liar* is the god of this world! and what a *lie* the world he rules! Has it ever realized one expectation it held out, or made good one pledge it has given? Pursue the inquiry! Ask the *millionaire* if his colossal fortune has brought him full satisfaction? Ask the *statesman* if his grasp of power has realized his ambitious hopes? Ask the *scholar* if his senior wranglership has met the highest aspirations of his soul? Ask the brilliant courtier if the smile of royalty has kindled sunshine in his heart? Ask the daughter of pleasure and fashion if the splendid dress, the exciting dance, the enchanting music, the incense of admiration and flattery, have given unalloyed pleasure to her heart, or imparted repose to her throbbing brow? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit," will be the melancholy response of each and of all! And yet the worshippers of mammon, the slave of sensuality, the daughter of gaiety, and the aspirant of literary honor and political power, goes round the wide circle inquiring-"Who will show me *any* good?" And thus will it ever be.

"Attempt how vain-
 With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,
 With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love,
 To satisfy and fill the immortal soul!
 To satisfy the ocean with a drop;

To marry immortality to death;
 And with the unsubstantial shade of time,
 To fill the embrace of all eternity."

Be it the diadem of the sovereign, the coronet of the peer, the mitre of the priest, the golden hoard of the miser-uneasy lies the head with no pillow of repose save the rotation of office, the uncertainty of wealth, the knee of human adulation, or the breath of popular applause:

"What is this passing scene?

A peevish April day!

A little sun, a little rain,

And then night sweeps along the plain,

And all things fade away!"

But easy lies the head whose treasure is in Heaven-whose Portion is God-whose Savior and Friend is Jesus, and whose hope beyond the grave is, "Glory, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life." Oh, cease, my reader, to be the world's poor slave! It will exact health and fortune, reputation and happiness, as the conditions of its favor! And when it can exact no more, like Samaria's calf, will "cast you off," and all that gave to earth its charm and to life its existence. And then when you have nothing more to give-when riches have cast you off, and health has cast you off, and desire has cast you off and friends have cast you off, and you lie down in sickness and want-the world you loved so fondly, and worshipped so ardently, and served so faithfully, will draw around you the curtains of gloom, and leave you to die alone, a deserted and poverty-stricken death!

But there is One who will never cast you off! Make God your soul's portion, Christ your heart's rest, and as this world of shadows and dreams fades upon your earthly sense, they will unveil to the eye of your spirit a world of reality, splendor, and holiness, where hearts never break, and love never is false; where hopes never wither, and sin never taints. Fly to Jesus! Shelter beneath His outspread wing, nestle within His loving heart. Soon you pass from this present evil world. The spell that holds you so closely and so strongly will be broken, and you will "give up the ghost, and in that very day all your thoughts will perish." All your thoughts of enterprise, all your thoughts of gain, all your thoughts of ambition, all your thoughts of pleasure, all your vain, irreligious, skeptical thoughts-all, *all* will perish! Oh, what a stern fact is Death! What a solemn anticipation is Eternity! How near to us its realities-Judgment, Heaven, Hell-nearer than the grave,-for the *soul* reaches its final and changeless destination ere the *body* mingles with its kindred dust. Did we think and feel aright, each oscillation of the pendulum, would awaken serious reflection, since it records how precious is time, and

how swiftly the little and unheeded moments are shortening the preface of eternity! Into that eternity you cannot carry the title you bore, the scepter you swayed, the wealth you hoarded, the false religion you cherished! Naked you came into the world, and naked you leave it. Where, then, will you leave your glory and your wealth?

"'He died rich'-that loudest laugh of hell."

The herald-at-arms may pronounce your titles, the sculptor perpetuate your virtues, the biographer record your achievements, and the journalist announce how rich you were; but, if you have not 'laid hold upon eternal life,' and in your vain attempt to 'gain the world have lost your soul,' oh! what avails it all?

Once more be persuaded to set your mind upon things above and not upon things on the earth. Implore the Holy Spirit to impart to you a new and Divine nature-a sense of sin-faith in Christ-and love to God. Henceforth, you will live no longer to yourself, to the flesh, to the world; but rising to the dignity of a responsible, accountable, and immortal being, you will wake from the long dream of your life to a conviction of the reality, solemnity, and endlessness of the life to come. There is hope for the most sinful and unworthy! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and if, turning to Him, penitent, humble, and believing, He will save *you*. When health casts you off, and riches cast you off, and friends cast you off, and you lie down to die alone-Jesus, in whom you have put your trust, will draw near, make all your bed in sickness, strengthen you on the couch of languishing, and when your spirit departs hence will receive it into glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.

But a vital question yet remains to be considered. How may the Christian resist and overcome the world? How are its attractions to be withstood-its temptations resisted-its duties and obligations met? We dare not reply to these interrogations in language other than God's Word. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." To repel an allurements so fascinating, to foil a foe so deadly, demands a weapon of Divine temper, and an arm to wield it of supernatural strength. We possess both in these words-"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." But faith in who?-and faith in what? In the first place, faith in the Crucified One. "Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" It is by looking to Jesus-by the power of the cross-by the grace that the Savior imparts-by the love that He inspires-by the glory that He unveils, that the believer can grapple and overcome this seductive and powerful foe. In the light of the cross, oh, how does the tinsel and glitter of the world fade!

To love Christ and to cling to the world-to be loyal to the one and a follower of the other-is a contradiction in terms, a moral impossibility. The worldling's life and the Christian's life are, in their principles, spirit, and end, as wide as the poles asunder-as essentially distinct as light and darkness, holiness and sin. Who by faith can look at Jesus-can study His unearthly life, His unworldly religion, His crucifixion to the world and by the world, and then court the smiles, and seek the pleasures, and adopt the principles of that world that wove a crown of thorns, and erected a cross of ignominy for Him? That the Christian must, necessarily, be in the world-sustaining honorably its natural relations-discharging faithfully its moral obligations and diligent in its business-admits not of a moment's doubt. But this implies no union with-love for-or conformity to-the world. He is in the world-but-

"Distinct as the swimmer from the flood,
The lyrist from his lyre."

Another, and not less effectual, mode of resisting the temptations and overcoming the power of the world is *faith in the unseen realities of eternity*- "looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Oh, how do the shadows and dreams of earth and of time dissolve and vanish into their own emptiness before our believing and realizing view of death, judgment, and eternity! Not that the 'power of the world to come' will lessen the legitimate importance, or render us indifferent to the proper interests, duties, and obligations of the present life. So far from this, faith in the future will dignify, hallow, and elevate the natural and lawful pursuits and duties of the present; and he who lives the *most* for eternity, will live the *best* for time!

Realizing that you are dead with Christ-are risen with Christ-and that even now you are reigning with Christ-oh! come out of the world-live above the world-and let your heavenly life evidence that you "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God:" that you have set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; and that your heart is where its precious treasure is-with Christ your Beloved in the heavenlies. Thus looking at Calvary-and beyond it to the crown-the palm-the harp that await you in glory, you will exclaim in the glowing language of the Apostle-"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*"

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

6. THE SYMPATHY OF ANGELS WITH CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN IN TEMPTATION.

"Then the Devil left Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."--Matt. iv. 11.

Resisted and discomfited in his every attempt to ensnare and overcome the Son of God, Satan retires, ingloriously defeated from the conflict, leaving our Lord Victor upon the field. *"And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."* The angels' sympathy with Christ in this the hour of His long and exhausting temptation was singularly beautiful and appropriate. He had been forty days and forty nights in personal and deadly conflict with the Prince and Leader of the mighty host of *fallen* angels. It was now graceful and proper that, retreating from the battle vanquished and crest-fallen, *good* angels should take their place, and in honor of His triumph, as in sympathy with His weariness and want, minister-as angels only could-to the Lord of angels. What a spectacle of marvelous and touching beauty! Methinks, all heaven must have looked down upon the scene filled with awe, instruction, and praise!

"So Satan fell; and straight a fiery globe
Of angels, in full sail of wing, flew nigh!
Who, on their plummy vans, received Him soft
From His uneasy station, and upbore,
As on a floating couch, through the blithe air."

The ministration of angels-or, messengers, as the word signifies-occupies a prominent and important place in the history of the world and of the Church. But in no point of view is their service so conspicuous and interesting as in its association with Christ Himself. In each of the most momentous events of His personal life, angels bore a prominent and impressive part. They were commissioned to announce the approach of the greatest event in the history of the universe-the incarnation of the Son of God. And when that stupendous fact had actually transpired, how sweetly broke their midnight music over the plains of Bethlehem-"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

From the manger of Bethlehem we pass to the garden of Gethsemane. We behold the incarnate God bowed in sorrow to the ground-the blood-sweat upon His brow-the cup of trembling in His hand-and the cry of submissive anguish on His lips-"If this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it,

Your will be done." And then, in His soul-agony and bodily weakness, "There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, *strengthening Him.*" How instructive and touching the scene! It was the hour of Christ's greatest weakness. It was the focal point of His soul's agony. It was the brimming, foaming, overflowing of His cup of woe! As man-the Man of Sorrows-He needed strengthening. From whence shall it come? His Father might have strengthened His humanity. From His own Divine nature Christ could have strengthened Himself. But no! the office was assigned to an *angel!* Another element of humiliation was to be added to the cup; His humanity was to be brought into so low a condition-so entirely separated from all the resources of the Uncreated and Infinite-as to be cast in the hour of its suffering and need upon the compassion and aid of the created and the finite. And "an *angel* strengthened Him." Oh, how truly did He now appear as "made lower than the angels." In what way the angels thus strengthened their sorrowful Creator and Lord we are not told. But, doubtless, they were commissioned to assure His human soul, thus bowed in grief, that He was still an object of Divine favor; that, in love that cup of woe was given; that, the promise that the Father would stand by Him in the hour of His woe, should be fulfilled; that, glory and honor would crown His sufferings and death; and that the joy set before Him-for which He now was draining the cup, and soon was to endure the cross-was the complete salvation of the people His Father had given to His hand. "And there appeared an *angel* unto Him from heaven *strengthening Him.*"

From the garden we follow Him to the sepulchre. Again the angels are His attendants. They encircle His tomb. They sit, the one at the foot and the other at the head, where His sacred body had lain. They were the first to announce His resurrection, as they were the first to proclaim His birth. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Honored celestials! Honored, above many, to be the heaven-commissioned body-guard at the tomb of the Son of God! Holy watchers! what a mission must that have appeared to you, when ye rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and beheld the illustrious Prisoner on whom ye waited come forth triumphant over the grave! Privileged, too, were ye to be the first to announce to the world that He that was dead was alive again, and bore in His girdle, henceforth and for ever, the keys of hell and of death!

From the sepulchre we follow the angels to the Mount of Olives, the scene of our Savior's personal and glorious ascension into heaven. Again they form His guard of honor! Hovering around the Mount, how eagerly they wait the moment when, springing from its summit, He should take His heavenly flight. Clustering in a countless throng around His ascending form, with shouts of triumph and paeans of praise they bore Him up to the celestial gates, and then demanded for Him a Conqueror's triumphant entrance! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." Oh, never was conqueror attended with such an escort, or made an entrance so glorious and triumphant!

"They thronged His chariot up the skies,
And bore Him to His throne;
Then sweep their golden harps, and shout,
The glorious work is done."

But another—a final—and, in its circumstances of solemnity and grandeur, more momentous and impressive ministration of angels in the history of Christ, awaits its accomplishment. The angels will form a distinguished feature in the *Second Coming of the Lord*. The same celestial host who attended Him from His birth to His ascension, will conduct Him back to earth, swelling His train and aiding His triumph. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father *with His angels*." "And He shall send His *angels* with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Who will not believe that in the great events thus closing the drama of the world's history, and consummating the glory of the Church, the angels of God will take an essential and conspicuous share? But let us return from this digression to the subject more immediately before us—*the sympathy of the holy angels in the hour of our Lord's conflict with Satan*. "Then the Devil leaves Him, and, behold, *angels came and ministered unto Him*."

In what way they thus ministered to the tempted Savior is not stated. But can it be for a moment conjectured? Christ had fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards was an hungered, exhausted, and faint; for He was very man, as very God—and, as such, He needed bodily nourishment. From whence would it come? He could work a miracle and feed the famished thousands; but He was among the people as He that served, who had come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to have exerted His Divine power in His own behalf now, by converting the stones into bread, would have been a momentary triumph of Satan. From whence then His needed

nourishment? Angels brought it Him! Those celestial beings who provided a repast for Elijah when, weary and fretful, he laid him down beneath the juniper-tree to die, now brought food to the famished and exhausted body of the God of Elijah, their own Divine Creator and Lord. "And, behold, angels came *and ministered unto Him.*" Oh, touching spectacle of wonder and love! Never was such a royal banquet-never such a host of celestial attendants-never so Illustrious a Guest! How grateful and refreshing to the depressed and exhausted Savior must have been this expression of angelic sympathy, and this supply of "angels' food!" But, let us not limit this expression of angelic sympathy with Christ to the material. Doubtless, there was much more than this-there was spiritual and mental refreshment. Would not these angelic students, who had studied the mysteries of redeeming love-"which things the *angels* desire to look into"-now seek to soothe and strengthen the human soul of the Redeemer in that fiery ordeal through which He had just passed? They had been sent from heaven charged with this holy and benevolent mission-to succour and comfort the Son of God! Would they not humbly remind the Savior of the Divine appointment of the trial through which He had passed-of the necessity of the discipline-personal and official-to which He had been subjected-of the untold blessings that would accrue to His Church-of the eternal glory that would redound to His Father from the long, agonizing temptation out of which He had just triumphantly come? In this way-bodily and mentally-would this angelic embassy minister to the Lord of angels in a moment when, as the God-man, 'heart and flesh were failing' through 'manifold temptations.'

Turn we now from the sympathy of angels with Christ in temptation, to the sympathy of angels with the Christian.

The ministry of angels is not a mere figure of speech, or, simply a poetic sentiment, but is in reality a distinctly and divinely revealed truth practically embodied in the history of the Church of God in all ages, and personally in the daily experience of each individual member of His Church. A single but expressive declaration of Scripture sets forth this doctrine, and places it in the strongest light as a matter-of-fact truth. After vindicating the superiority of Christ to the angels-demonstrating thus the Lord Jesus to be Divine-the Apostle naturally, and as an argument of their inferiority, thus, adverts to their office and ministry in the Christian Church:- "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall heirs of salvation?*" We are thus brought face to face with the fact. Can we draw any other reasonable deduction from these words than this-that the whole celestial hierarchy is engaged in the comparatively humble, yet, nevertheless, highly honorable office of ministering spirits, or servants, appointed to aid the Church of God, collectively and individually, in its

history on earth? How that ministry is exerted we are left very much to conjecture-the fact alone standing out in the clearest possible light. But, taking the recorded ministrations of angels as the standard of their present ministry, we may arrive at an intelligent, and by no means sentimental, idea of the service they now perform in the Church of God in its existing dispensation. In the first place, we have their *appointment*. They are not self-delegated. They are *sent* by Christ, their Lord and Creator, and this conclusively proves their inferiority to Christ Himself. They do not assume the office, but in a subordinate capacity-as the servants of the Church-are appointed, commissioned, and sent by a Power infinitely higher than their own. "*Sent forth.*"

The *objects* of their ministry are, "the heirs of salvation," *i.e.*, the whole elect Church of God. Adopted into God's family, all believers are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." They are heirs, expectants, or inheritors of salvation. These include the whole Church of God-all the members of the one Church of Christ,-whatever their distinctive badge among men. Christ, in the dispensation of His favors-especially in His great salvation-recognizes no denominational differences: but, if holding Him the One Head-believing in Him, loving, serving, and following Him-all alike are acknowledged as the "heirs, of salvation," for whom is reserved an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away."

Their office, clearly, is "to minister." This, doubtless, includes an individual and unceasing guardianship; protection in danger, seen or unseen; counsel in perplexity; sympathy and support in sorrow and affliction; succour and supply in times of need; mental and spiritual strengthening when mind and soul are depressed and desponding; and above and beyond all-and this is an especial, touching, and solemn part of their holy ministry-attendance upon the redeemed spirit, in its flight to eternal glory. "And was carried *by the angels* into Abraham's bosom." We do not see, nor can we explain, the mystic ladder that communicates from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven; but of this we are assured that by it, descending and ascending, the angels of God are continuously bent on embassies of intelligence and on errands of love to Christ's heirs of glory. That the "family in heaven" is intelligently conversant of the history of the "family on earth"-without any express revelation of the fact, but arguing from analogy-I see no reason to doubt. Surely their interest in the concerns and progress of the kingdom of grace below, cannot be totally absorbed in the exclusive enjoyment of the kingdom of glory above. And if-as we are told-"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents"-we cannot reasonably doubt that the intelligence of the conversion to Christ of our kindred left on earth-as conveyed by these ministering spirits-must heighten the bliss and

swell the song of the "spirits of just men made perfect." And let it be borne in mind that this joy in heaven is not confined to the angelic host, but, as it is expressed, "joy *in the presence* of the angels of God over one that repents;" and that, consequently, with that joy must blend the joy of the glorified saints. Shall angels-strangers to redeeming love-thrill with ecstasy over the conquests of grace on earth, and those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb be sensible of no emotion of gladness, and breathe no joyous anthem of praise at the good news that the kingdoms of this world are gradually becoming-and by the accession of their own kindred-the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ?

But here our observations of the angelic ministry must rest. Who can describe what their sympathy is when the fiery darts of Satan-fast and flaming-fly thick around the tempted believer? If angels ministered to Christ in the hour of His temptation, surely we may believe that the same office is discharged in the case of all tempted in a like manner with Him. Invisible and unheard, they troop around the person of every saint of God, bent upon the high and holy office of tending upon them for whom the Son of God sacrificed His own life. *"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them."* *"He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."* Still we must keep in view that they are but God's messengers and Christ's servants, doing His will, accomplishing His purpose, and obeying His behests. They are to be recognized, not adored; loved, not idolized; revered, not worshipped. Infinitely above the highest angel in heaven is the "Captain of our salvation," bending over us with a Divinely intelligent and unslumbering care; and angels-His *aides-de-camp*-are only what He makes them, and nothing more. If any creature channel flows with blessing, He fills it; if empty, He exhausts it; reserving to Himself the sovereign and inalienable power to do as seems good in His sight, that He may be all and in all.

And yet how great the honor conferred upon the lowliest saint of God, that these holy, intelligent, powerful beings, commissioned by Heaven, should be his personal and constant attendants, fanned and enclosed each moment by their silken, noiseless, and unseen wings. Oh, who can tell how near, vigilant, and powerful, they are in every assault of Satan, in every moment of danger, and in every hour of grief, diverting the winged arrow-unveiling the concealed snare-snatching from some yawning precipice: or, should the arrow have pierced, or the feet have stumbled, or the sorrow have come-by some mysterious influence, we cannot now explain, but which will be fully known hereafter-healing the wound, soothing the spirit, and conducting our footsteps in the path of safety, pleasantness, and peace. And if the Son of

God, the Creator and Lord of angels, condescended to accept the service of, and to be ministered to by, angels-if by them He was supplied in want, soothed in grief, and strengthened in battle-should it be thought a thing incredible that these same celestial beings should encircle our path, and cluster around our dying pillows, ministering to us of their love, succour, and sympathy? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

"And is there care in heaven? and is there love
 In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
 That may compassion of their evils move?
 There is!-else much more wretched were the case
 Of men than beasts. But O exceeding grace
 Of highest God that loves His creatures so,
 And all His works of mercy doth embrace,
 That blessed angels He sends to and fro,
 To serve to wicked man, to serve His wicked foe!

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
 To come to succour us that succour want!
 How do they with golden pinions cleave
 The yielding skies, like flying pursuivant,
 Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
 And all for love and nothing for reward;
 O why should Heavenly God to men have such regard?"

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

7. THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST WITH THE CHRISTIAN IN TEMPTATION.

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."-Heb. ii. 18.

We ascend with our present subject into a higher and diviner region of thought and feeling. From the sympathy of angels in temptation, we rise to the sympathy of the Lord of angels. And if the one has proved so intelligent, soothing, and helpful in the hour of battle and of danger, what must be the power and effect of the other? Infinitely transcending the combined ability of all the hosts in heaven, must be that of the tempted Head and Savior of His Church. There is a point in sympathy and power which no angel can possibly reach. The truest and most effectual sympathy is that which flows from kindred suffering. He who soothes me in temptation-stanches my wound-and weeps when I weep-must be one whom the archers have pierced-whom adversity has schooled-whom sorrow has chastened. "Not being untutored in suffering," says an ancient classic, "I learn to pity those in affliction." And not less expressive the same sentiment as rendered by a modern poet-

"They best can bind
Who have been bruised oft."

It is here that the sympathy of Christ infinitely distances all other; and all the benevolent angels in heaven must yield the palm to Him. Probably no chapter of our Christian life brings us into such close and tender contact with the heart of Christ, or He with ours, as the temptations-satanic or otherwise-which constitute so essential an element in our Christian character here, and in our fitness for its higher and more perfect development hereafter.

In directing our attention to a view of Christ's sympathy in temptation, let us inquire what are some of its more distinctive characteristics. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

The first feature which will impress the thoughtful mind is,-its *Priestly character*. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It will thus appear that, one essential part of Christ's Priesthood is-*sympathy with the tempted*. There does not exist in the offices filled by Christ in the Church of God so essential and precious a one as His *Priestly* office. His sacrifice lays the foundation of all the other relations He sustains

in the economy of redemption. He could not possibly be a Prophet to instruct, or a King to govern, or a Mediator to administer, or a Brother to sympathize, but as He first became a *Priest to atone*. There must first be the offering of a righteousness and the shedding of blood in vindication of the honor of the moral government of God, ere He could consistently exercise any one function of His mediatorial mission. And it is a noteworthy fact that, the most prevalent and arrogant attack of modern heresy is directed against the Priesthood of Christ! The underlying element of existing ecclesiasticism is a species of *pseudo-sacerdotalism*, arrogating to itself a *priestly* authority and function, entirely ignoring the office, and subversive of the work, of Christ, the one only Priest of His Church. It is from this sacerdotal element that springs-as a natural and logical sequence-the notions of apostolic succession, sacramental efficacy, auricular confession, and priestly absolution. Exorcise this ghostly pretension-*priestly power*-and with it will vanish the kindred spectres which wander among the tombs of those who are dead to the reality and power of the life of God in the soul of man.

But the Priesthood of Christ occupies its own solitary, unapproachable, and untransferable position in the Church of God. "We have a Priest"-a Divine Priest-a sacrificial Priest-an interceding Priest; and every true member of the "Royal Priesthood," needs and acknowledges no other. That there is a divinely appointed "priesthood" in the Church of Christ, composed of all believers, of every nation and from every communion, we readily and gratefully admit. "Ye are a Royal Priesthood." The conditions of this Priesthood are not submission to any rite, or subscription to any creed, or membership with any Church; but all true believers become members of this "Priesthood" in virtue of their spiritual and mystical union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Priest upon His throne." Thus the saints of God belong to the true "seed royal," through their relation to Christ, and will, with Him, reign "kings and priests" for ever. Oh, how faintly do the saints of God value their true *royalty*! How we forget that we belong to a "kingdom of priests"! that we are clothed with royal apparel-the robe of Christ's righteousness! that we sit at the King's table, and feed on royal dainties-that a life-guard from the Court of Heaven is commissioned to be our ministering attendants; that hereafter we shall *reign* with Christ in His kingdom of glory upon the New Earth and the New Heaven, for ever and ever. But to this royalty is attached the distinction and office of *Priests*. "*Ye are a Royal Priesthood*"-made so by Christ and through His Priestly office, and anointed as such by the Holy Ghost. To this office of Priests is attached the function of *sacrifice*: not an atoning, propitiatory sacrifice for sin-this exclusively appertains to the Great High Priest of His Church-but the sacrifices which, as a Royal Priesthood, we offer, are those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit-the sacrifices of prayer and praise-and the presentation of our "bodies as a living

sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our most reasonable service." And for this "kingdom of Priests"-this "Royal Priesthood," there awaits the anthem which will employ their tongues and tune their harps through eternity-"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." My reader, rise to the dignity of your *Royalty*, exercise your privilege as *Priests*; and while you strive to keep your royal apparel unspotted from the world, day by day offer the sacrifice of contrition of heart for sin, and thanksgiving and praise to Him who, by the one sacrifice of Himself, has for ever delivered you from its guilt and condemnation. "By Him, therefore"-our Priest, Sacrifice, and Altar-"let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Oh, how fragrant your prayers-melodious your praises-and a sweet-smelling savor your offerings of love done to the saints,-the representatives of Christ-all presented and accepted in virtue of the One Sacrifice He our Priest has offered for us to God! Your cup of cold water quenching the thirst-your crust of bread satisfying the hunger-your seasonable garment clothing the nakedness-your visit of sympathy soothing the sickness-of one of Christ's disciples, is an "odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God;" and is laying up for you a grateful recognition, a loving welcome, and a rich reward of grace in the Heavenly Kingdom; when Jesus will say to you, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Enter you into the joy of your Lord." Hold fast the profession of your faith, without wavering, in the one sacrificing Priesthood of the Lord Jesus! Recognize no priestly authority, or power, or function in the Church of God but His! "Jesus only"-the One "High Priest over the house of God."-is the watchword of the Christian Church-the counter-sign of the great army of the living God-the one badge of the "Royal Priesthood" on earth and in heaven.

"Shall I trust my soul's salvation
To a fellow-creature's care?
Can a priest, a saint, or angel,
Save me in my dark despair?
None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Hears a contrite sinner's prayer.

"Do I need a Mediator,
Other than the Son of God?
Can the Virgin Mary help me?
Jesus shed for me His blood
None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Intercedes for me with God.

"Is there aught of praise or merit
 Due to works my hands have done?
 Can a life of tears and penance
 For a single sin atone?
 None but Jesus, none but Jesus:
 He must save, and He alone.

"Can the waters outward washing
 Inward change of heart supply?
 Life and energy bestowing,
 Can it bid corruption die?
 Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
 Send Your Spirit from on high!

"Can the sacramental symbols-
 Emblems of a Savior's love-
 Can these satisfy the longings
 Of a soul born from above?
 None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
 Food for fainting souls can prove."

The sympathy of Christ with the tempted is *experimental*. It is this attribute which, perhaps, more than any other, imparts to it such peculiar interest and tenderness in the experience of the Satan-tempted believer. How strikingly is this feature of personal experience of our Lord's sympathy with the tempted expressed by the Apostle: "In that He *Himself has suffered, being tempted*, He is able to succour them that are tempted." And again: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that *He Himself is compassed with infirmity*." This is a most touching and soothing view of Christ's compassion. The sympathy He offers in infirmity, in sorrow, in temptation, is not theoretical and visionary; it is the fellow-feeling, the sympathy of One who has been taught in the same school of suffering, who has passed through the same furnace of affliction, who has endured the same fiery temptations-"tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." You look, in your sorrow, to the "Man of Sorrows;" in grief, to Him who was personally "acquainted with grief;" and in temptations from Satan, from the world, from man, to Him who battled with the devil-who was despised, rejected, and crucified by the world-and "who would not commit Himself to man, because He knew what was in man." Go ye then to Jesus, and tell Him just what you fear, just what you suffer, just what you

are. The infirmity that oppresses you, encompassed Him; the flaming dart that pierces you, was hurled at Him; the painful cross you carry, bowed Him to the earth; the bitter cup you drink, once pressed His quivering lips.

The sympathy of Christ with the Christian is *intelligent*. It is not a blind, heartless sympathy, either unacquainted with, or indifferent to, our case. "I know their sorrows, and have come down to deliver them," was the wonderful and consolatory declaration of God concerning His people under the cruel and crushing service of Pharaoh. And what are the words of Jesus the Shepherd of His Flock but an echo of the same truth: "I know My sheep." Oh, how unspeakably assuring is this truth! Enough, that Christ knows our temptation, is acquainted with our sorrow, though not another being in the universe is cognizant of it. It is the sympathy of a full and intelligent knowledge of all the delicate shades, and the subtle circumstances-too sacred and intricate, perhaps, to explain to another-of the position in which we are placed, and of the temptations by which we are assailed. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us-it is high, we cannot attain unto it-for it is the knowledge of an Infinite and Divine mind. The most confidential friend may be ignorant of the mental and spiritual exercise through which we are passing, of the fiery conflict we are waging, of the temporal and anxious pressure we are sustaining, the lonely path we tread, the trying life we live, the daily cross we carry;-enough that Christ knows it all! And this assurance should infinitely outweigh the solitariness and sadness we experience, and which the ignorance, or, perhaps, the coldness, of all others may painfully augment. Who would exchange the compassion and individual knowledge of our daily life which Christ possesses for the most tender commiseration the human heart ever felt?

The sympathy of Christ is *practical* and *helpful*. In this feature it differs essentially from much of the so-called sympathy of the world. There exists a species of compassion which; apparently sincere and fervent, evaporates in mere words: "Depart ye in peace, be ye warmed and filled," is the utmost limit of its expression. The helping hand is not extended, the closed purse-strings are not unloosed, the tear of sympathy moistens not the eye, and thus no practical and timely outflow of sympathy is the response. And, "if a brother or a sister be naked, or destitute of daily food," or the mind oppressed with anxiety, or the heart bowed with grief, appeals to our compassion and asks our aid, of what practical avail if, with the priest and the Levite, content with an idle look of pity, we pass by on the other side, leaving the object of our heartless indifference to bear his burden or nurse his wound in lonely and unrelieved sorrow? Oh, for more *reality* in our religion! Oh, for more of the sweet, helpful charity of Christ!-that charity which, like the gentle dew of evening, distils silently and unseen, but

softening and reviving, upon the fainting flowers-a link from the golden chain which entwines an angel's form-and which, like the mild radiance of the emerald, emits a softer and more pleasing luster than the sparkling diamond or the brilliant ruby. Such, if we are Christ's true followers, should be characteristic of our charity; like the Good Samaritan-not evaporating in empty, meaningless expression, but embodied and manifested in noble and fragrant *deeds*-

"Like the sweet South,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor."

Apply this to the sympathy of Christ with His tempted saints. How true, yet how faint, the illustration! Tempted in all points like as we are, is there a single form of assault with which He is not personally familiar, and with which He does not practically sympathize? Are you tempted by worldly attraction? distrust of God? creature idolatry? false worship? self-destruction? Oh, bend an ear to Christ's own words-"My grace is sufficient for you; My strength is made perfect in weakness." Not satisfied with a mere expression of sympathy, Christ imparts skill to fence, power to bear, grace to overcome. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but 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 that ye may be able to bear it." "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Nor let us overlook the exquisite *tenderness* of Christ's sympathy. Could language be more expressive of this than that of the Apostle? "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are." 'Touched'-how full of meaning the word! We are 'touched'-our deepest sensibility and sympathy aroused-by a spectacle of suffering and want. Such is the sympathy of Jesus! He is *touched* with our misery, touched with our temptation, touched with our grief. Who can sound the depth, or portray the tenderness of that sympathy with bereaved sorrow embodied in the inimitable picture, which no artist has ever attempted to delineate-"Jesus wept"? Such is the sympathy of the Great Tempted One, to which we invite you. Approach Him with prayer and confidence-unveil to Him your trouble-make known to Him your want-confess to Him your sin-sob your grief upon His bosom-for "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"-and He is *touched* with *yours*.

The sympathy of Christ is not only that of a fellow-sufferer, but it is also that of an *Intercessor*. This office constitutes Christ's work in heaven. "He ever lives to make intercession." "By His own blood He entered once into heaven

itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." What a sweetly soothing truth is this, that every temptation that assails us-every affliction that bows us-every trouble that befalls us-every sorrow that crushes us-and every sin that wounds us, is represented in heaven. All are borne upon the breastplate-entwined with the prayers-perfumed with the incense of our once Sacrificing, but now Interceding, High Priest. "I *have* prayed for you-I *am* praying for you-I *will* pray for you," is the sweet assurance He addresses to all who, as He once did, are passing through the fiery ordeal of temptation-sifted as wheat-tried as gold-and are "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in the flesh." Words addressed by Christ to the Apostle Pete; are equally addressed to every assailed believer-"Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

"Jesus, that King of Glory, reigns
On Zion's heavenly hill,
Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears His Priesthood still.

"He ever lives to intercede
Before His Father's face:
Give Him, my soul, your cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father's grace."

"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

We must not overlook the crowning attribute of Christ's sympathy-its *perfect sinlessness*. "Yet without sin." In this, its purity, consists its power. Human sympathy-the most tender-must, necessarily, be imperfect from the fact of its *sinfulness*. Not a relation, nor a passion, nor a feeling, nor a sentiment of our humanity has escaped the effects of the Fall. Sin has palsied and infected the whole. Not thus the sympathy of Christ. Ignorance does not blind it-selfishness does not warp it-fickleness does not change it-ingratitude does not chill it-unworthiness does not forfeit it-time nor distance do not impair it, because *sin* does not taint it! "Yet without sin." Oh, how truly real, exquisitely tender, and unspeakably soothing and precious must *that* stream of sympathy be which flows from a spring so sweet and from a fountain so pure! Such is the sympathy of the Savior with all the tempted, tried, and sorrowful of His Church.

This thought of Christ's pure sympathy, suggests a cognate truth unspeakably comforting, and assuring to the tempted Christian. The perfect

sinlessness of Christ in temptation teaches us that, temptations are not *per se*-in other words, of *themselves-sinful*. That, whatever the shaft of the adversary may be,-however skeptical and blasphemous, carnal and worldly, God-dishonoring and self-destroying the temptation-the mere presentation or suggestion of the Devil to the Christian mind involves no moral obliquity, and leaves upon the conscience no trace of guilt. Ignorance, or forgetfulness, of this fact has often occasioned needless mental suffering to many of the Lord's tempted saints. Where, in the history of His Church, shall we find so tempted, and yet so holy, a Being as the Lord Jesus Christ? And yet, not only did He emerge from the terrible ordeal unscathed, but He came forth with not the shadow of a shade of moral dishonor, of compromised integrity, attaching to His soul. We cannot say that He emerged from the furnace more purified and refined-for He was "without sin," and needed it not-but we may safely affirm that, as the suffering Mediator and Head of His Church, He became more thoroughly fitted by the discipline of temptation through which He passed to sympathize with and succour them that are tempted. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;" and that lesson of 'obedience' thus learned, involved a fellow-feeling-a sympathy the most perfectly intelligent and exquisitely tender-for all the weak and tempted ones of His Church.

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

Be not, then, cast down-write no bitter things against thyself, you tempted soul! Yielding not to the vile suggestion of the enemy-for temptation only becomes a sin as we succumb to its power-ye shall, like your tempted Head, come forth from the flaming furnace with not the smell of fire upon your garments. You may be sorely tempted by Satan to believe that the Bible is not true-that Christianity is not divine-that God is not faithful-that prayer is a delusion-that your sin is unpardonable-that Jesus does not save-and that your past religious experience and Christian profession is but delusion and hypocrisy, and your hope of heaven but a lie; nevertheless, these suggestions of Satan are not only all false, but, '*resisting*' them with your Lord's invulnerable weapon, "It is written"-*"he will flee from you"*-one touch of the Divine Word overcoming him-leaving you, like your Lord, victor upon the field.

Forget not that *temptation* is an essential part of the development of Christian character here, and of the education and fitness of the Christian for glory hereafter. "Prayer, *temptation*, and study," remarked Luther, "are

essential to the Gospel minister:" equally so to the private Christian. And, since temptation is a test of the reality of our grace, and the genuineness of our faith, and the stability of our hope, let us accept the discipline with meekness and love; and putting on the whole armor of God, withstand the Evil One, and having done all to stand. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)

8. THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF THE TEMPTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE TEMPTED.

"That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."-Heb. ii. 14, 15.

The mission of the Son of God in the flesh compassed a twofold object as it referred to Satan. The first, to destroy the *works* of the Devil; the second, to destroy the *Devil himself*. With regard to the first object, we read-"*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of this Devil.*" The second is equally as clear-"*That He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.*" No facts are more distinctly and solemnly revealed than the final overthrow and everlasting destruction of the Evil One, and the victory and eternal blessedness of the saints of the Most High, consequent upon that destruction. The "god of this world" is not to reign for ever! Too long, too widely and uninterruptedly has he maintained his supremacy and power over this fallen and sinful empire. In its history, as it will then be read and studied in the clear light of eternity, will be seen how central, significant, and appalling was the place usurped by him in the government of the race. And, as in the first creation of the world, he appeared conspicuous and active upon the scene, ere sin had yet defiled and the curse had yet blighted,-so, in the end of the world, he will reappear "the observed of all observers," to be arraigned and tried, overthrown and "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." The prophetic and significant words of our Lord-the great Tempted One concerning the great Tempter are yet to receive their full and solemn accomplishment-"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Oh, yes! the rebellious, bloodstained standard of Satan is not for ever to float over this dark empire of sin and woe. His overthrow is certain-his doom is fixed-his days are numbered-"the chain which is to bind him is forged, and the fires which shall encircle him are kindled;" "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, has kindled them." And all who followed his standard, who wore his fetters, and who obeyed his behests, will share his sentence, condemnation, and punishment-"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." We have alluded, in our opening remarks, to the destruction of the *works* of the Devil, as constituting an important part of Christ's mission. Let us briefly advert to this interesting and consolatory fact, as preparing us for the consideration of the final, ignominious, and total overthrow of the power and kingdom of the Devil himself at the Coming of the Lord. The passage we have placed at the head of this chapter limits our view to one particular work of Satan-*his "power over death."* And, probably, we could not specify any exercise of his

power more terrible to the saints of God, or their deliverance from which is more firmly anticipated and ardently longed for than this.

"Him that had the power of death." The words are profoundly significant and solemn. They are not intended to ascribe to the Devil, originally and independently, an arbitrary and supreme power over death. This alone belongs to God, "with whom are the issues of death." And yet the language is strikingly significant and impressive-"Him that had the power of death." It refers, doubtless, to the fact that the Devil was the first introducer of sin, and consequently, of death; that he was the cause of death, and the instigator of death throughout his empire. That this power is limited and controlled by a higher power is implied and unquestionable. He has no power to inflict death in any single instance, beyond the permission of this superior and governing authority. But how appalling and far reaching this power! "He was a *murderer* from the beginning:" and all murders are the result of his instigation, and in the permitted exercise of his power. "The lust of your father the Devil ye will do," said Christ, addressing Himself to the Jews. And the crowning act of his murderous lust was his instigation of Judas to betray, and the Jews to murder, the "Lord of life and glory." And not content with thus suggesting and abetting the murder of our Lord, he strove with all the argument and persuasion he could command to prompt Him to an act of self-murder. "Cast Thyself down from hence." And still he exercises this terrible, though limited and curbed, power of death-as we have shown in a preceding chapter-by suggesting to the human mind the idea of self-destruction as a convenient and expeditious mode of escape from existing trouble, suffering, and shame. How graphically and accurately has our great national dramatist portrayed the mental exercises of the soul under the influence of this Satanic temptation to self-murder!

"To die,-to sleep;
 No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
 The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to,-'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished. To die,-to sleep;-
 To sleep perchance to dream:-ay, there's the rub;
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Must give us pause there's the respect
 That makes calamity of so long a life;
 For who would hear the whips and scorns of time,
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office, and the spurns

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
 When he himself might his quietus make
 With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,-
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
 No traveler returns,-puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment,
 With this regard, their currents turn away,
 And lose the name of action."

But a more awful illustration of the power of death as possessed by Satan is yet to appear-his power to inflict the inconceivable and indescribable horrors of the "Second Death." That *this* power is conferred-under the control of a yet higher power-to his hands, who can reasonably doubt? When the "wicked shall be cast into hell," and "whosoever is not written in the Book of Life" into the "lake of fire," the power of death then entrusted to Satan will be exhibited in its most appalling form. But let me relieve this awful picture by presenting a bright and blessed contrast-the contrast of those over whom the Devil will have no such control: *"Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power; but they shall be priests to God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."*

An interesting and important inquiry here occurs! in what way did Christ thus destroy the Devil? "That He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." We see not as yet his destruction. Far from it! The world is still Satan's empire, ruled with a despot's unlimited sway. And, seeing that his time is short, and his overthrow inevitable and total, he would seem, in these "last days," to have 'come down in great power and wrath,' more wicked and fierce than ever. There are those who are blind to this fact. They tell us that the world as it grows older grows better! And, as proof of this assertion, they are wont to point to the rapid strides of civilization and refinement, of education, science, and social progress. They assure us that humanity is not so depraved, that the people are not so ignorant, and that society is more highly cultivated and refined. But what, and where, are the solid evidences of all this improvement? That civilization has increased-that education is on the march-and that luxury of living, polished manners, and

advanced intelligence are the result, we readily admit. Nor do we overlook the results of sanitary reform-the efforts to reach the lowest *strata* of society-the great spread of Christian knowledge-the increased and honored labors of the evangelist at home, and those of the devoted missionary abroad. But with all this, the question still returns-Is the world really growing better? We trow not. Crimes the most hideous-social evils the most appalling-commercial immorality the most humiliating-atheism and infidelity the most bold-massacre and butcheries, legalized by the term of 'war,' and prosecuted in the name of Christ and under the holy banner of the cross,-are more rife, conspicuous, and widespread than ever! Who, as he intelligently surveys the present state of the world, and reads its history by the clear light of God's Word, can with any show of reason and of truth affirm that Satan is losing his power-that his sceptre is passing from his hand-and that the world, which has so long groaned beneath his iron will, is growing wiser, holier, and happier? And yet, with all this, there is a present moral destruction of Satan by Christ going on, typical and anticipatory of his final and eternal overthrow and destruction when the Redeemer shall come to restore all things to their more than pristine holiness and beauty. We can only suggest for the further study of the reader two or three illustrations of this moral victory of Christ over Satan.

In *the conversion of the sinner* it is palpable and indisputable. When the Holy Spirit regenerates a soul-and there is no spiritual regeneration but that which He imparts-"It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing"-the supremacy of Satan in that soul is destroyed. "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." Oh, what a blessed overthrow, spoiling, and casting out of Satan is this! He is now dethroned-his scepter broken-his kingdom supplanted-his captive delivered-and, henceforth, Jesus reigns in that regenerated and emancipated soul, triumphant, supreme, and for ever! My reader! is Satan's empire thus destroyed in *your* soul?

And what are the foiling and defeats in the after history and experience of the Christian but the continuous decreasing of Satan's power by Christ? 'When first emancipated from the supreme tyranny of Satan, by converting grace, it does not follow that the holy war is complete. The temporarily defeated foe-as in the case of our Lord-retires but "for a season," to return again and yet again to the battle, armed with a new shaft, and hurled with yet more skilful precision and potent effect. Thus we are taught that, when by Christ's grace we foil him in one attack, we have need to expect another, and to strengthen those weak points of the citadel the most exposed to the renewed charge. The physical power of Christ over demoniacal power was, doubtless, typical of His moral power over Satan in the soul. "For this

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that *He might destroy the works of the Devil.*" Your daily life, O believer! is a continuous destroying by the Son of God of the works of Satan in you. The overthrow of his kingdom in the souls of the regenerate is a progressive, lifelong work: the last stone of the unholy edifice not cast down until the "earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved," and the freed spirit is clothed upon with its house from heaven. Oh, what a Divine and skilful Captain of Salvation is ours! He observes the shaft drawn from the quiver-places his finger upon the bow that hurls it-diverts its winged course-and covers the head in the day of battle. How sweet is then the new song we sing-"Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us a prey to their teeth! Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." There are few portions of God's Word over which the Christian mind has lingered with more painful and intense interest than this. Some of the most eminent saints-distinguished alike for great grace and heroic achievement-have dragged this oppressive chain for many a weary stage of the Christian life, nor dropping it until their feet smote the chill waters, and they passed over with the shout of victory upon their expiring lips-"O death! where is your sting?"

Having destroyed him that had the power of death, *the destruction of death itself by Christ* naturally and logically follows. The words of the Apostle in his letter to Timothy places this truth in a yet more clear and forcible point of light "Our Savior Jesus Christ, *who has abolished death*, and has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." In what sense has Christ thus abolished death in the history of His Church? Not literally, of course, since death still reigns, and will continue to reign until the Second Advent-"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming:" then shall Antichrist be destroyed, and Death utterly and for ever abolished-"swallowed up in victory." But there are several senses in which Christ may be said already to have "abolished death" in the history of His Church. He has abolished death by destroying *the law of sin and of death* in the case of His people; and that law, thus repealed, death has no more legal power over them that believe in Jesus. Christ has abolished death *as a penal evil*, since, by putting away the sins of His people, He has taken from death its sting, rendering it a harmless foe! And how completely has Christ abolished death by *changing the character of death* in the dissolution of His saints! To these it is no longer death to die, but a gentle falling *asleep*, the soul awaking perfected in the likeness of Christ. How sweetly did Jesus thus speak of the death of the beloved brother

of Bethany: "Our friend Lazarus *sleeps*: I go to wake him out of *sleep*." And it is recorded of Stephen-Christ's first martyr-"He fell *asleep*"-Oh! glorious death!-amid the infuriated shouts of his murderers and the storm of missiles beating around his head-his bruised and bleeding brow reposed upon the bosom of Jesus! And, addressing the bereaved Thessalonians, how tender and consolatory the language of the Apostle-"I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are *asleep*, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which *sleep in Jesus* will God bring with Him." To have so transformed this most appalling event of our being as to represent it by the exquisite image of *a sleep*-the very poetry of death-surely it may in truth be said-and in a sense most assuring to all those who dread the approach of the 'last enemy' -"Christ has *abolished death*." In your case, O believer! Christ, by His obedience and sacrifice, has so changed the character and the conditions of death that it no longer is a penal crime, but a covenant blessing; no longer a stern law, but a precious privilege; no longer to *die*, but sweetly and calmly to *sleep*. Oh, what must Jesus have endured in His personal conflict with Death, thus to have changed the entire character of death in behalf of all His saints! He met death as none had ever met the "king of terrors" before-in all its unmitigated bitterness, unalleviated agony, and most appalling circumstances: His dying pillow, a *cross*; His attendants, *murderers*; His restorative, *wormwood* and *gall*! What do we not owe to You, You precious Jesus! of love, obedience, and service, who met ten thousand deaths in one, that, when we die, we might fall sweetly asleep in You?

"What is *Life*?-'tis sitting,
 Jesus, at Your feet,
 All things gladly quitting
 For that favored seat:
 Where, in sacred union,
 Earth and Heaven meet!

"What is *Death*?-'tis springing,
 Savior, to Your breast;
 'Tis the freed bird winging
 To her glory-nest:
 Life and Death with Jesus-
 Heritage how blest!"

The 'love of Christ'! truly "it passes knowledge." The Lord the Spirit direct our hearts into this infinite ocean of love, tiding over all our sins, sorrows, and fears. "O Savior! was it not enough for You to be manifested in flesh?

Did not that elementary composition carry in it abasement enough without any further addition; since, for God to become man, was more than for all things to be returned to nothing; but that, in the rank of miserable manhood, You would humble Thyself to the lowest of humanity, and become a servant? O Savior! in how despicable a condition do I find You exhibited to the world! lodged in a stable, cradled in a manger; visited by poor shepherds, employed in a homely trade, attended by fishermen, tempted by presumptuous devils, persecuted by the malice of envious men, exposed to hunger, thirst, nakedness, weariness, contempt. How many slaves, under the vassalage of an enemy, fare better than You did from ungrateful man, whom You came to save! Oh, let me not see only, but feel, this great mystery of godliness, effectually working me to all hearty thankfulness for so inestimable a mercy! And now, O Savior! what a superabundant amends is made to Your glorified humanity for all Your bitter sufferings on earth! Your agony was extreme, but Your glory is infinite; Your cross was heavy, but Your crown transcendently glorious; Your pains were inconceivably grievous, but short; Your glory everlasting. You, that stood before the judgment-seat of a Pilate, shall come in all heavenly magnificence to judge both the quick and the dead; You, that would stoop to be a servant on earth, rules and reigns for ever in heaven, as the King of eternal glory!"

The final overthrow and doom of the Great Tempter will not be more certain and appalling than it is distinctly and emphatically predicted. Among the apocalyptic visions which floated before the eye of the exiled Seer of Patmos, was one graphically and sublime descriptive of this signal and stupendous event. The prophecy would seem to divide itself into two parts-the one bearing upon the *present* scene of Satan's empire, the other referring to his *future* judgment and everlasting doom. With regard to the first, we thus read:-"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him." This vision clearly refers to the position of Satan in the Millennium. During that blissful period of the world's history the devil will be relegated to "his own place." For six thousand years this Archfiend has maintained his cruel despotism over the entire earth, walking to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. Then a new and more blissful era in the world's history will have dawned. The Millennium-long the inspired song of the poet and the evangelical prediction of the prophet-will have arrived; and banished to the prison-house from whence he came-pinioned with a massive chain-the door of his dungeon secured with a great seal from heaven-Satan is "permitted to deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Oh, what a halcyon period of holiness and rest will the earth-long

travailing in weariness and woe-now experience! How changed the scene! The curse giving place to blessing-sin and crime to holiness and security-pestilence and sickness to perfect sanity and health;-national wars and feuds to universal concord and love-want and misery to plenty and delight; suffering, bereavement, and woe to a deathless, sorrowless, and tearless world. Blessed inhabitants! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

"No sigh, no murmur, the wide world shall hear;
From every face He wipes off every tear;
In adamant chains shall death be bound,
And hell's grim Tyrant feel the eternal wound."

But this thousand years of millennial holiness and repose-like all earth-bound objects-has an end. It must be remembered that Satan, though confined, is not yet cast into Gehenna; sin, though suppressed, is not yet extinct; and War, though ceasing, has not yet sheathed its sword. Humanity, though restrained, is still fallen and depraved; and Satan, though fettered and sealed, waits but his release. His temporary imprisonment terminates. "After that he must be loosed a little season," and resume his cruel reign of sin and bloodshed until his final and everlasting overthrow and doom, as thus graphically predicted in the apocalyptic vision of St. John, shall have arrived. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and, the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil, that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast (the Papal power) and the false prophet (the Mohammedan) are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." How awfully sublime the scene! The doom of Satan is at hand-the last scene in the dark drama of his history is reached-and the chief Criminal of the universe is about to receive the due and just reward of his deeds. The great white throne is fixed; upon it the "Ancient of Days" is seated-and before Him all beings,-angels and men,-are cited to appear. Central, and towering above all of that countless throng, is Satan, the Head-Centre of Pandemonium. His trial commences and takes precedence of all the rest. In that trial, O tempted Christian! *you* will personally participate. "Know ye not that we shall *judge angels?*" You who once stood as a target for his flaming darts, frequently foiled, wounded, and cast down: you into whose mind this malicious Fiend-the seducer and destroyer of our first parents-often suggested the skeptical doubt-the blasphemous thought-the

unhallowed imagination-the hostile will-you shall hear the voice of the Judge saying-"Come near, My saints, sit with Me upon My throne and aid the judgment, approve the sentence, and witness the doom of your great Adversary, malicious Tempter, false Accuser, and fiendish Foe. Come, place your feet upon his neck-and unite with the grand chorus of all the host of heaven in the universal acknowledgment of the holiness, equity, and truth of the sentence which consigns him to the "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."-"You art righteous, O Lord, which art, and was, and shall be, because You hast judged thus." Tempted Christian! fight on-pray on-hope on. A few more flaming shafts, a few more hard fights, and the last battle is fought and the glorious victory won: and you shall see your great Tempter no more for ever. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

[Home](#) [QUOTES](#) [SERMONS](#) [BOOKS](#)