

which may not be, nay which, as a matter of fact, is not in some way or other brought into requisition in the accomplishment of the divine purpose in the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the maintenance of His authority among men.

The bottom of the difficulty, however, is not yet reached. What we find it most difficult to believe, is that the Divine Being should first commission or appoint Satan to move David to sin, and then be angry with him, and punish him for doing that which He had Himself indirectly prompted him to do. And yet if the end of the moral government of God in this world is to develop and build up a complete manhood—if the grand end at which it aims is the formation of a genuine character—it is not easy to see how this could be reached without the discipline of trial. But there can be no trial without temptation. Come from what source it may, whether it comes to us by the appointment or the permission of God, temptation is one of the essential conditions of a state of probation. And nothing but infinite wisdom can properly determine the strain to which the virtue of any individual soul may be justly subjected, or the severity of the discipline required for the complete development and perfecting of any individual character. We must beware, therefore, how we arraign God at the bar of our imperfect judgment, or how we presume to pronounce upon His dealings with the children of men.

But if it be thought inconsistent with the character of God that He should select Satan to be His instrument in the trial of man, and to appoint him and send him forth on his mission of temptation, it must not be forgotten that what it might be inconsistent with the character of God to appoint, it might nevertheless be consistent enough for Him to permit. He is, we know as a matter of fact, permitting every day what we cannot at all conceive it possible for Him to appoint. He permits all kinds of abominations to be practised by mankind, which it were the sheerest blasphemy to accuse Him of appointing. But *in Scripture language, God is often said to do a thing when He merely permits it to be done.* In fact, this has been accepted by biblical critics as a rule of interpretation, without which many passages in the Bible could be scarcely understood. In illustration of this rule, we need only turn to the history of the hardening of Pharaoh's