

pleasures so powerful in their influence upon our natures that we are irresistibly led to a sinful excess. These gifts of nature, if we may so call them, are unquestionably made with the intention of communicating enjoyment and attracting us to the use of them. The food by which life in all living creatures is fed and prolonged is of a varied and abundant kind, beneficial to existence and delightful to appetite. Our Creator might have annexed to the use of the abundant food, which His bounty has conferred, none of the varied and renewed pleasures which we experience in appropriating it—satisfying the cravings of hunger and thirst might have been secured by the necessity of ridding ourselves of pain without the additional incentive of pleasure ; but our Maker in His benevolence has made that which is necessary to our existence, pleasant to our taste. What is predicable of food and drink is predicable of most, if not of all other sources from which desire and appetite are appeased. They are endued with an intrinsic power of communicating enjoyment ; we apply to them accordingly, because they yield delight as well as because they are essential to existence. Inasmuch then as they yield enjoyment we go to an excess in the use of them. We are so enamoured of the joys which the objects of desire and appetite communicate as to set no bounds to the use of them. Excess is outrage of a law of Nature and Nature's God ; all excess is in the strictest sense transgression, that is, going beyond natural and moral limits, and as such is sin—not only sin, but suffering. When we fall into an immoderate employment of the materials of desire and appetite, suffering is the sure consequence. Sooner or later habits of indulgence engender misery. The natural sufferings following sinful excess are poverty, shattered health, wretchedness, disgrace, remorse. When those miseries are embittering his life, man is prone to charge God with having a hand in leading him into them on the ground that His gifts are so sweet and desirable as to prove a seduction to excessive indulgence and resulting sin and misery. Thus the very benevolence of God is with singular unreasonableness accused of being the occasion of temptation. Now "God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man." To tempt is to allure to evil ; to seduce the understanding by false views and corrupt the affections by the enticements of sinful pleasures. To say that God tempts is a grave aggravation of guilt ; to think that He has any, the most remote connection