

Original Contributions.

TEMPTATION.

I do not purpose, in this little paper, to discuss particularly the temptation in the wilderness, as it, perhaps, is not in every sense the parallel of temptation in general, as in the pathway of life the "rank and file" of humanity are troubled by it, and often led captive by its seductive influence.

Sin is the great destroyer of our race; but if there were no temptation there would be no sin. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to understand something of temptation, and from what source it is most to be feared, in order that the point most in danger may be more carefully guarded.

Whence, then, comes temptation? It may be that the great religious world is ready to answer with one voice: Temptations come from the great enemy of our race, who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in truth, because there is no truth in him. Who, when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it. (John viii:44.) Who is said to go about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter v:8.)

But I am not going to discuss him now, nor will I, in this paper, try to determine whether he is a person or a personification; whether he is a self-existent or a created being, and if created, who created him; whether he had a beginning or was always being; whether he is local—circumscribed in his movements, or omnipresent; whether he will cease to be, or endlessly exist; whether he will finally be overruled for good, or reign a monarch of torment over millions of our race throughout the endless cycles of eternity.

Talmage says: "He can go all around the world in a moment of time." Doubtless Talmage knows. There is something said about showing all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Perhaps this is equivalent to going around the world, etc. We will allow that to pass.

I have nothing to say of him now further than to enter a strong and everlasting protest against making of him a "scapegoat" to bear away the guilt and blame which rightfully belongs to every one of us mortals who may permit ourselves to be led away by seductive influences until, being overcome by temptation, we transgress God's holy law (sin against God), and bring ruin (wages of sin) on ourselves, and, it may be, others. Then, although we are the instruments we are the comparatively innocent instruments—we are not the cause. The cause is in the temptation. The temptation came from the devil, and as he was the tempter, he should bear the chief blame, and we should be held as comparatively innocent.

A young man committed a crime so terrible that its recital almost paralyzed all who heard of it. The writer asked an old friend, tried and true, a man who loved the Bible, who had endeavored to make it the man of his counsel and the guide of his life: How was it that a man so young, and apparently good standing in society, could commit such a terrible crime against society and against God?

Our friend replied: I do not know. It must have been the devil. Our friend was asked to note what James says (1:12, 15), and then asked further: Do you think that James, the apostle, knew anything of this crime before he wrote his epistle? You see, do you not, that he entirely covers the ground in this particular case: Drawn away of his own lust and enticed; then lust having conceived brought forth sin, and sin finished, brought death. This was literally true, and is literally true either wholly or partially in every instance of sin against man or God.

Temptations come not from God. Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of (R. V.,

from) God; for God (R. V., marg.), is untried in evil—evil things, and He Himself tempteth no man. This is a positive statement, although we are told in Gen. xxii:1, that God did tempt Abraham, etc., but Paul gives us the thought in a form more consistent with the character of our loving Father (Heb. xi:17) where he says: Abraham when he was tried (not tempted) offered up Isaac, etc. I heard a dark-skinned son of Africa, many years ago, give that beautiful thought: "No, brethren," said he, "God did not tempt Abraham, He tried him, but did not tempt him. God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man." Every man is tempted (R. V., marg.) by his own lust, being drawn away by it and enticed.

The great danger lies in the natural appetites. Temptation is an appeal to those appetites, and to yield—indulge unlawfully—is sin.

The temptation in the wilderness was simply an appeal to the natural appetites—human desires, i. e., the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Jesus yielded not; so, no sin. A clear example of temptation, and how to meet and overcome it.

But ever since sin entered into the world, man has sought a "scapegoat." He would remove the responsibility from himself that another might bear the guilt. "The woman thou gavest to be with me," said Adam, "she gave unto me and I did eat;" and the woman said in turn: "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat."

Why did not the woman say: I am guilty; I listened to the voice of the charmer; and the man: I am guilty in that I listened to the voice of my wife rather than the command of God. But "as it was in the beginning it is now," and, perhaps, "ever shall be."

When temptations overcome you and you sin, do you blame the devil?—do you make him the scapegoat to bear your guilt? When you drink to drunkenness and, perhaps, commit murder, do you blame the rum-seller?—do you make him the scapegoat to bear your guilt? Oh, the temptation was so strong I could not resist, says one. But where did the temptation come from? James says: You were drawn away of your own lust and enticed. He says: Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts (R. V., pleasures), that war in your members? Yes, the lusts which war in the members of the human body, and by which man is drawn away and enticed are the contents of the "Pandora's Box," which, being poured out, have clothed this beautiful earth in mourning, made "countless thousands mourn;" have filled untold millions of hearts with sorrow, and caused all the wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and violence since Cain first raised a murderer's hand to give the first human victim to the cold embrace of death.

Drawn away of his own lust and enticed—is temptation. On the other side of the river, there will be no temptation to those who reach the Father's house, because the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life will all be done away. Bodies made like unto the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ will not be subjects of temptation, because the earth-born passions will be forever separated from them. "The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven."

Paul did not spend much time watching the devil. He had something to attend to which was of more importance. I do not think that Paul cared very much about the devil. He never said much about him; but he did spend a great deal of time preaching Christ as the medium of drawing wandering souls back to God. He also had a continuous care over the natural body and appetites, and he labored to keep them under, lest he should be enticed and drawn away, and so be a castaway with the others of his nation—doomed.

There was an age of witchcraft, but to the enlightened mind witchcraft is dead. It is well it is dead, because, while it lasted, thousands of innocent ones perished under the power of that superstition. There was a time when Luther threw his inkstand at the devil; but Luther was new from the church of Rome but not yet clear of her superstition. If Luther lived to-day he would not throw his inkstand at the devil; because, although his nerves might be shattered by over-work and the care of all the churches, he would not be brooding so much on the pictures of evil and visions of horror by which the church of Rome kept in subjection a darkened world, but rather of the mighty God who lives, and rules, and reigns; and instead of leaving man unaided to wage war with a monarch of evil, by a mighty one has destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their life subject to bondage (Heb. xii:14, 15.) Glory to his name. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. There is no power, saint of God, in heaven, earth or hell which will harm you if you be followers of that which is good.

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THE NEW LIFE.

The Christian life is a growing life, and will, therefore, always be new. The Christian is constantly growing wiser, and better, and stronger. When he ceases to grow he ceases to live. Life is a growth, and is, therefore, progressive. We need, however, to distinguish between the life and the principle of life. The progression required is not in the principle of life but in the life itself. There is no new principle in nature. There may be principles and laws new to us. What we need is a new demonstration of the old principles. The law of gravitation is as old as the world. "Robert Fulton did not introduce any new power in steam. He gave us a new demonstration of the old power." This is what we mean by progress: a new demonstration of the old laws and old powers, both in nature and grace. The farmer who cultivates and enriches his soil by improved implements and a better fertilizer, and thereby produces a richer harvest, has not progressed one step in the law or principle of agriculture, but in their arrangement and demonstration. There need be no improvement in the seed that is sown, which is the law of all harvest, but in how and when it is sown. The farmer who has given little or no attention to the progress made along this line is left, and he leaves the farm with the conclusion that farming is out of date.

There are many who believe the Bible is out of date and not adapted to our age. They draw their false conclusion from the meagre harvest of Christian fruit or Christian life. This is unwise. The word of God, which is the law of life, can never produce a harvest in uncultivated soil. The failure in the Christian life is not attributable to the seed or the word of God, but to the uncultivated and unregenerate hearts of men. The good seed produces fruit only in the good soil. The progress is not, therefore, to be with the laws of God or the word of God, but with man. The better he handles the word of God the greater will be his progress in the Christian life. When we see a Christian (?) who is not progressing in Divine life; who is not growing stronger, purer, happier and more devoted and consecrated to the work of God, we justly conclude that he has handled the word deceitfully. It is not in the progression of truth but in its use that will produce noble lives. The reason why there is such an incongruity between the word of God and the lives of many Christians (?) is because of the lack of mental growth and development. When the new wine of