

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST NOT A VISIONARY REPRESENTATION.

BY THE LATE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

Matt. chap. iv. ver. 1.—“Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.”

THE word *Devil* answers to the Hebrew *Satan*, “an adversary.” Wickliffe, in his translation, has rendered it, *the feende*, a word derived from the German *feind*, which also signifies *an enemy*. This temptation was part of our Lord’s humiliation. His holy soul was to be subject, through this long period of forty days and forty nights, to the foul suggestions of evil; it was also appointed that he should be made, in this respect, as in all others, like unto his brethren, “for that he himself both suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted;” of which ability his victory is the indubitable proof. By this, too, he was to show forth his power over Satan, by whose guile the first Adam had been seduced; and to begin to justify his title to that seed of the woman, whose office it was to bruise the serpent’s head.

Our modern rationalists, as they would be esteemed, but who have a much better title to be considered as the Sadducees of the Christian church, deny the existence of the devil, and resolve therefore the whole of this account of our Lord’s conflict partly into vision and partly into personification. It may, however, be affirmed, that on philosophic grounds the existence of such malignant spirits as are employed in the work of tempting men, involves no absurdity, and accords with analogies among men which cannot be denied, because they are obvious facts. If man, a rational being, is often seen to hate all good, and delight only in evil, superior intelligencies may possess the same characters. If we see in many men a maturity of vice which expels all the better feelings, and an anxiety in such depraved persons to corrupt others, and to glory in the miseries they thus inflict, what have we in these cases but visible portraits of what Satan himself is, and exemplification of the work in which he is employed? And, finally, if it enters into our state of probation to be tempted to evil; that such temptations should not arise as well from the influence of evil spirits as from the effect produced upon the imaginations, passions, and appetites, by visible external things, no good reason can be given. There is nothing in this case which is contrary to any principle, clearly laid down in the word of God, who maintains a free-agency, in these circumstances of our state of trial, by the succours of his grace. On the other hand, the denial of the doctrine of temptation from the influence of invisible beings upon the soul of man must force us either to reject the Scriptures altogether, or to adopt those modes of violent interpretation which are wholly inconsistent with the simplicity of their historical narratives, and which render their meaning in all cases so uncertain, as to destroy their character as a revelation of truth from God.

Nor less objectionable is the principle advocated by the theological critics of Germany, and applied to this and other cases, namely, that our Lord and his apostles often adopted the erroneous theological opinions and modes of speaking current among the Jews, just as they employed the philosophic language and allusions of the age in which they lived, without intending to give their sanction to any system of human science. For it remains to be proved, that either our Lord or his apostles in any case do even speak according to an erroneous philosophy of the day; and, if they do, it is only allusively in cases where the current notions of the day would serve the moral purpose they intended just as well as the more correct mode of speaking now used, if, indeed, we are nearer to philosophic truth on such subjects than the ancients. But an error in what may be called pneumatological divinity stands on a very different ground. If there be no

Satan, there is no Holy Ghost; for each may be resolved into personification: if there be no spiritual evil influence, we have no reason to conclude from the same scriptures that there is any supernatural good influence. Further: if there were no true demoniacal possessions, then were the persons reputed to be so possessed mere lunatics and epileptics; and the casting them out was a deceptive assumption of a pretended power, fatal to the character of our Lord, and the honesty of his disciples; and if there be no disembodied spirits, then were the disciples deceived, and that by our Lord himself; and the hope of conscious existence immediately after the death of the body, so cheering to them and to all good men since, is without any foundation in truth. Finally, not to push these consequences any further, it follows, in direct opposition to our Saviour’s own words, that, although Jehovah is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he is the God of the DEAD, and not of the LIVING.

All these consequences may, indeed, be hazarded by bold men, who treat the Scriptures with little deference; but their crime is not lessened by their temerity; for they profanely represent the inspired writers as teaching popularly what is not true, on some of the most serious subjects which can influence human feelings and human conduct. They change, too, the whole economy of Christianity, which presents us with a grand view of the connexion of man, and the events and history of our world, with invisible worlds and beings, and thus isolate our earth as the theatre on which these great displays of the wisdom, power, and mercy of God take place, from those innumerable other beings which take an interest in them, and for whose instruction and advantage, or discomfiture and punishment, they are also permitted. A large portion of the grandeur of the great scheme of human redemption is thus at once annihilated by these petty and minifying systems.

As to the notion, that the temptation of our Lord was transacted in a vision, it is contradicted by the simple narrative form which is used by the evangelists. It is in the same style that they record this event, and those which the objectors themselves acknowledge to be real; and with quite as much reason might the history of the crucifixion be resolved into the phantasms of a dream as the account before us. Thus viewed, too, the temptation could no longer be one of the circumstances of our Lord’s humiliation; and the great moral use which St. Paul draws from it, as affording an assurance to the followers of Christ, that in all temptations they might rely upon his sympathy, as having been “in all points tempted like unto us, yet without sin,” is lost; seeing that we are tempted to evil, not in vision, but in reality. Finally: it is sufficient to settle this whole question entirely to remark, that if the temptation of our Lord were a dream or visionary representation, the usual exercise of the reason and the senses being suspended, it was *no temptation at all*; for there could have been no sin if in a dream or vision, in which all free-agency would be suspended, our Lord had either commanded the stones to be made bread, or had cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, or had even done homage to Satan himself.

TRANSMISSION OF NEWSPAPERS.—The frequent representations made to the Postmaster-General (Earl of Lichfield), of the abstraction of newspapers from their envelopes during their transit, has induced his Lordship to issue an order, permitting the name and address of the party to whom it is directed to be “written on the paper itself,” as well as on the wrapper. This arrangement is of great importance to the newspaper proprietor, as well as their readers, for in future no plea can be set up of the wrapper having been defaced or accidentally torn off, so as to prevent the paper reaching its destination.

THE
FARTH
The verge
Now mor
His bligh
To that ca
A few sho
Numbers

Ab! this
The even
Heighten
The gentl
Now lea
And cont
The start
Seen loo
And hym

Still glor
Rose and
While sh
The wild
The azar
Is still,—
Save who
The mag
And as is
The dark
In captiv
An here
With we
To lowl
Ah! the
Now in
Which
Leaves
All—all
Proclai
And as
Or list
Or eat
Or gaze
Of m
Raising
In lo
Creatio
I see—
And in
The fo

And is
Ah! the
The t
On se
The d
With
The p
The s
With
Tune
The c
The v
And v
Heav
Last
And

Or list
Or eat
Or gaze
Of m
Raising
In lo
Creatio
I see—
And in
The fo

And is
Ah! the
The t
On se
The d
With
The p
The s
With
Tune
The c
The v
And v
Heav
Last
And

RI

Rev.
learned f
Lord has
situation