

tion going before, hard to take, as we conjecture ; but, once taken, final. Jesus would rather seem to fail—however bitter the experience He thus nerved Himself to face—than consent in any way to tempt the Father who had sent Him.

Yet once again, Jesus was really tempted to hasten His reign on earth by condescension to the methods of this world and its prince. The way seemed open. There was a vast amount of enthusiasm ready to be transferred to one who would declare himself the national leader of the Jews, to one who could restore the throne of David. The whole of the East might not improbably have given in its submission, for expectations of some great one to arise were in the air. Visions of a world-wide empire with boundless possibilities of good might not unreasonably be entertained. But Jesus never advanced one step upon this course. From first to last He utterly repudiated any idea of such a thing. Not that He had never entertained the idea. The record of the Temptation opens our eyes upon this point. And by the very decisiveness of the after-repudiation we may perhaps measure the force with which it had once assailed Him, and the struggle it had cost Him to resist it. Think with what sharp severity He once rebuked the astonished Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." What did that mean? Did it mean that Jesus was insensible to what Peter urged? On the contrary, it meant, I think, that the temptation to shrink from suffering was strong enough in itself without being backed by the solicitations of a beloved Apostle.

Much doubtless yet remains to be written on the mystery of our Lord's Temptation. In the interval it is good to realize that our Lord's perfection as man was no mere matter of course, as would seem to be sometimes supposed ; that if He was sinless, it was through no impossibility of sinning ; and, above all, that the fact of His Godhead, strange as this may sound, so far from exempting Him from being tempted, may have actually laid His manhood open to the inroad of more subtle and more formidable temptations.

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