

conclude from Matthew that the temptations began at the end of the forty days; but from Luke we learn that they continued with greater or less severity and multiplicity ("every temptation," ver. 13) throughout the whole period. Jesus recognized in the thoughts that came to him a personal evil influence outside of himself.

Did eat nothing. A physical symptom of his mental and spiritual absorption. This need not be taken more literally here than in Matthew, who says he "fasted."

He hungered. His physical wants asserted themselves and became the occasion for testing his spiritual loyalty and for establishing a precedent for the future work he had been pondering.

3. The devil said. It is not well to dogmatically maintain that Satan spoke audible words here, any more than in Luke 10, 18 it can be thought that Satan was seen to literally drop from the clouds to a definite spot on the ground. It is better to say that Jesus recognized the personal Satan as suggesting this temptation. **If thou art the Son of God.** Jesus had lately been given this title by the heavenly voice. A right to ask for displays of divine power might seem to be thus implied. His physical hunger suggests to the mind of Jesus, filled as it is with spiritual illumination, the question, When should a Messiah ask for miraculous interference? He is at no loss for the answer. It is when the Father indicates his willingness thus to interfere. The Spirit has led him into the present situation, but has given no sign that he is to escape from it by miracle. Jesus sees Satan behind this suggestion of miraculous deliverance.

4. According to the best manuscripts the words "but by every word of God" do not belong here as they do in Matt. 4, 4.

5-8. Showed...in a moment. Mentally the reigning powers of the world came before him, presenting a vivid image of the possibilities of a political Messiah's sovereignty. This was the very vision that haunted and inspired Alexander; a kingdom coterminous with the earth. In and of itself a wish to redeem the Jewish people from their oppressors would not have been sinful on the part of Jesus. If he had been conscious of no special Messianic mission he might have laudably desired to re-establish the empire of David, and even extend its boundaries far and wide. But the training which Jesus had received, together with the divine illumination which rested upon him, made it clear to him that his Father called him to establish a kingdom not of this world. The acceptance of the human and popular ideal could only be urged upon him by Satan, and the adoption of it would be paying homage to him rather than to God.

9-12. He led him. In thought. His ideal of a spiritual kingdom and a spiritual Messiahship must be openly proclaimed not only in Galilee but in Jerusalem, the nation's religious center; nay, more, in the temple, and the most conspicuous part thereof. But how will the people receive such a proclamation? Will not be he figuratively, and perhaps literally, destroying himself by such a course? It may be. And in such an event may he not hope that his Father will miraculously interfere and save him from the fatal consequences of obedience to his own convictions? Do not some passages of Scripture warrant such an inference? The suggestion was an attractive one to the human heart of Jesus, but the Spirit that rested upon him enabled him once more to recognize the agency of Satan in it. For the first time possibly Jesus now foresaw the shadows of Gethsemane and Golgotha. He now knows that as Son of God he cannot insist that the cup of death itself shall pass from him. It is clear to him that to require the miraculous aid of angels (Matt. 26, 53) to save him from

the consequences of testifying to the truth would be an unwarranted presumption. He shrinks from this possible result of his preaching, but resolves that in all his Messianic work he will be obedient unto his Father's will even unto death, Phil. 2, 8. The subsequent chapters of the gospel show that Jesus was faithful to the fundamental principles he fixed upon in the desert. He wrought miracles for spiritual ends alone; he preached a spiritual gospel; he voluntarily suffered the death to which his teaching exposed him.

13. Every temptation. The comprehensiveness of the preparation for his public work which Jesus made in the desert is brought to our notice. He was tempted in all points like as we are. **For a season.** Jesus would have many opportunities for again reviewing his fundamental principles. So late in his career as the conflict in Gethsemane he would be compelled to decide for himself the question of obedience. Luke 22, 42; John 12, 27.

The Lesson Council.

Question 8. *How was it possible for such a personality as that of Jesus Christ to be susceptible to temptation?*

Because he humbled himself and became a part of a race that God allows to be tempted for its moral development. To be susceptible to temptation is, however, not in the least inconsistent with perfect purity.—Rev. W. I. Haven.

How was it possible for a personality not to be susceptible to temptation? I cannot conceive how it is possible for human nature, in a vigorous human body, and in a world where it is surrounded with evil, to be free from temptation. If we claim, with Romanists, that the mother of Christ was absolutely holy, and therefore without any tinge of impurity, and that his Father was the Holy Spirit, then there might be some ground for the claim that there was nothing in his nature which would make him liable to temptation. But, even then, his mother was human, and must of necessity, by a law of generation, transmit to him a human nature. And, so far as we know, all human nature is susceptible to temptation. More than this, is it not certain that all created moral beings are susceptible of temptation, as were Adam and the angels who fell? If moral nature implies the power to do right or wrong from choice, it also implies a susceptibility to evil influences; and the presence of evil, with its influence upon the individual, is the occasion for exercising this power of choice. But this presence and influence of evil is temptation. Hence if Christ was a moral being, he, in his human nature, must have been susceptible to temptation.—Rev. C. W. Cushing, D.D.

Jesus possessed all the endowments of human nature. His intellect perceived facts, his feelings responded to them, and became motives soliciting him to act accordingly—Satan appealed to his sensibilities with ideas of personal good. These ideas involuntarily stimulated desires for immediate gratification. Almost instantly his perfect intellect perceived the method of gratification presented to be inconsistent with absolute right, and as instantly his will rejected the appeal, and his desires vanished. Had he dallied with the desire after he perceived the method of its gratification wrong he would have entered the enchanted ground of sin.—Rev. D. C. Knowles, D.D.

It is less difficult to believe the temptation possible than to explain how it was possible. There is no virtue in resistance unless the tempted one is susceptible to