The Nature and Limits of Temptation

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil.

St. Matthew IV. 1.

This deeply mysterious passage of our Lord's humiliation can never be understood by us more than in part. It is full of truths only partially revealed, deep from our inability to comprehend them, we must refrain from offering too boldly to interpret the nature of this temptation.

Certain great truths however, we may learn from what is here written.

That same Spirit with whom the Son of God was one from everlasting.
And by whose also he was anointed at his baptism, was here the sure pledge of the spiritual conflict with the devil. When it is said, he was led of the Spirit, it is to be understood in the same sense as when it is said, he was anointed. tempted, and then the same Christ Jesus being susceptible of all these, by reason of his true and proper humanity, that same Spirit by which he was anointed to preach to the meek, was also his guide in all that it behoved the Messiah to do and to suffer for the sin of the world. St. Paul tells us that it was "by the Holy Ghost" that he

Isaiah 61:1. 2 Hebr. 18:14.
offered himself to God; and that it was
procrastinated the Son of God in person ac-
cording to the Spirit of Incarnation, by
the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
from the dead; that is to say, by the
Divine Nature in which the Son and
the Spirit are one and indivisible. Then
through the Spirit He was led up by
His own free will to be tempted of
the devil. It was the onset of the
warfare which was to end in the
destruction of “him that hath the empire
of death.”

There is an evident relation, partly
of coincidence, and partly of contrast,

3Rom. I. 4
Between the temptation of the first Adam in the garden, and of the second Adam in the desert. The first Adam was tempted through the senses, and by the allurements of self-exaltation, and consciousness of gifts which he did not possess. So with Christ: He was tempted to satisfy His hunger by a miracle; to display His divine nature, by suspending the laws which govern our state, to which He had made Himself subject, and to forbear His Father for the sake of earthly creature. In the two first temptations, it does not at first sight appear in what
The sin to which Satan was tempted consists.
It may be that Satan sought for proof that He was the only Christ, and that He hoped either to destroy or to draw Jesus from God. Hence temptations were therefore put in a form of incredulity and provocation, like the rulers who accused Jesus before the Cross, saying, "He saved others let Jesus save Himself, if He be Christ the Elect of God." And the malefactor also, who "reaßuessed Jesus saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." These words express a great depth of contempt, mixed with incredulity and fear. It would appear that Satan half knew and half feared lest He were the Christ.

And so helped his temptations as to goods, as he thought, into a manifestation of himself, and in ways that would destroy the pure integrity of his obedience to God. The temptation lay not so much in the particular form, as in the moral character and effect of the act. So it was in the first temptation of man: the act was in itself, it may be, indifferent; the spring of it was disobedience, and the end was death. In this instance it would have been a recognizing of subject to His Father, and a defeat of the ends for which He had become incarnate.

Now, this temptation in the desert was a part of the humiliation of the Son.
of God. As He took our nature with all its infirmities, it was needful that He should make full trial of our state. As He prayed, slept, and knew grief, so also He was tempted. It belonged to the truth of our nature, and to the realities of our state in this world of sin, that He should suffer as we suffer. And this is specially mentioned by St. Paul, who encourages us by saying that He was "Tempted in all things like as we are, without sin." It was needful He should learn by experience the full sting and hatefulness of sin, and the weakness and susceptibility of our nature. For this, then, the Merciessant, because of the perfection of His love

I pet IV, 15
Nature, learned "by the things which she suffered." What humiliation can greater than that he "who is not amember of Eros," should be solicited by the humble and hateful suggestions of mistrustful presumptions, self-exalting thoughts, and that with the taunts and allusions of the devil? What is more affecting to holy minds than the haunting suggestions of vicious of evil? And yet surely, so such trial were was so affecting to any other as to the Holy One of God. The absolute holiness of the Godhead was then brought into contact with sin, as the divine immortality was brought into the neighborhood of death upon
The Cross. It is impossible for us to measure the intense humiliation and spiritual anguish of such a familiarity with the Wicked One. Nor is it fair, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, can know the holiness of sin as it was manifested to Christ, or the depth of sorrow and abhorrence which was excited in the soul of Adam who was without sin.

Again; this temptation, it may be, was as necessary to our redemption as the Passion upon the Cross. It was parallel to the Temptation of Adam in Eden. For this point, that as he by freeing himself to sin and death, so Christ by our coming has delivered us from the same.
The first Adam was our head unto continuance from; the second is our Head unto everlasting life. Now it is to be observed, that our Lord was tempted as a Man, and as a Man He overcame. He did not put forth divine powers of miracle, nor support Himself by divine interpositions. He might indeed have let loose multitudes of angels against the tempter; but how then should He have been the Example and pledge of mastery to us that are tempted? His victory over the devil was gained by the preparation of prayer and fasting, and by the powers of patience and steadfast perseverance to Gore. The same shield, and the same weapons of offence, He also possessed.
His Majesty was guided, as His temptation was endured. Strictly within the limitations of His humanity, that conflict was complete in evidence from the fact, that though St. Luke says, "Satan departed from Him for a time," the leviathan read that Our Blessed Lord was ever again solicited by His Allure.

It was buffeted and blasphemed by the malice of the devil; contradicted and pursued by the hatred of men; all the powers of darkness were in activity against Him; yet We are there told that He was again tempted to withdraw His obedience from His Father in heaven. Even in the last night of agony in the garden, in the midst of exhaustion, fear, and anguish, when the tempter might...
have seemed to have found a reason of
peculiar weakness, he did not appear:
his work lay elsewhere; he was buried
in another direction. He had compassed
the death of Jesus whom he could not
overcome; he had entered into Judas;
he was counter-working, as it might
seem, to destroy our whom he could
not defeat. Now this perfect overthrow
of Satan, in our nature, is a mystery
out of which our Master's power tempted
from the derived, as our falls are
derived out of the first transgression.
Christ has overcome for us; and by
virtue of our union with Him, He daily
overcomes Satan in and through our
degenerate nature, and therefore prospers.
And repeats and carries out this great making in the desert. It was this great warfare and victory that St. John saw in his vision. And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought with his angels: and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent who is called the Devil, and Satan, who seduceth the whole world: and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our Lord, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren, who accusep
there before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. "I
Apologists, prophets, martyrs, and saints, all the
members of His mystical body became
partakers of His mystery; over the Kingdom
of Darkness, and over the devil, the prince
of this world. So, through persecution,
distress, and torment, in the provinces
and cities of the world, in marketplaces
and theatres, in the wilderness and
in solitude, they overcame the strength
and the subtlety of the tempter, and in
temptures "confirmed his power, whom
all the world worshipped.

This temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Apoc. XII. 7-11."
lays open to us the reality and nature of our own. It lifts the veil which is upon our eyes, the unconscious veil which is upon our hearts, and shows us what is really going on at all times in the spiritual world around us; by what we are led, and what are the mysterious powers which are operating themselves upon us. Man, that we never suspect to be more than the effects of chance, or hazard, or the motion of our own minds or the caprice of fancy, may be the agency of these latent awful being who tempted both the first Adam and the second. There is something very fearful in the thought that Satan, whom we so slight or forget, is an angel—a spiritual being of the highest order—endowed therefore with energies and gifts of a superhuman power.
with intelligence as great as his Malice, lofty, majestic, and terrible in his fall. Next to the Holy Angels, what being can it be more fearful to have opposed to us. And that with intense and implacable severity, and at all times hovering invisibly about us? From what we read of the temptation of Christ, we may learn.

I first, that it is no less to be tempted; nor is our being tempted any proof of our being lawful. This is a most leading thought; for among the afflictions of life, few are so bitter and perpetual as temptation. Sorrows, pains, disappointments, mercies, crosses, oppositions, which come upon us from without, are not to be compared in suffering to the inward desire of being tempted to evil deeds, words,
Desires and thoughts. The subtlety and illumination of evil is so great that it comes upon us before we are aware of it; sometimes it seems to flow off by a sort of reflection from things the most opposite in their nature; sometimes to be taken into our minds insensibly in the midst of indifferent thoughts, to then suddenly to unfold itself. Every as who is seeking for Christian perfection must have found how thoughts of sin, pride, self-complacency, thinking and then others (whichever still, sometimes seem to shoot off from the holiest acts and contemplations, and again to spring up out of subjects of the greatest purity and humiliation; sometimes else in this.
I keep sorrow and depression, when our mind  
are most remote from any consciousness inde-  
cence of them. If, God! This, God need  
more. Which is implied by this, will  
be recognized by all who are seeking after  
holiness; and it is this that causes the  
bitterest and most distressing distress  
of mind. Sometimes it makes us doubt  
of our whole religious life — almost of  
our regeneration. And I can see yet  
in the flesh, "in the sale of bitterness, and in  
the long despondency," Can I dare to pray? Is  
not even prayer a mere profession?  
how Can I approach you with a soul  
haunted and distressed by such a  
presence of flesh? It is indeed, full  
to be suspicious and self-acccusing; for  
these can be no doubt but that most
Of our mental temptations find these opportunities in actual faults, past or present, or in that original taint of sin which is still in us: that is to say, in those parts of our nature which are the effects of the fall of man, and of our own personal disobedience. But the susceptibility of temptations belong to us, not as fallen beings, but as men, perfect beings may be tempted, as the angels; and Jesus, as Adam in the garden, Christ in the desert. So long as we are in this state of probation, deep in this world of conflict between sin and holiness, it must be so. Even though we have made faults at this very hour, still the power and subtlety of evil by which we are surrounded would not cease to approach us, and to force us.
upon our perception and our hatred. Thus much we may learn for our comfort: though we should consent it into a more, if we were to solve the fact of our daily consciousness of evil thoughts and inclinations by this truth alone. It is too true that for the most part, we are tempted because we have aggravated and inflated our original sinfulness. Nor by this disobedience have given to it a

Vindictive and appetite which by nature it did not possess. Evil thoughts, wishes, associations, practices, are the source of most of our inward depredations. To the Natural Susceptibility and our original corruption we have added an immense number of inclinations to things
forbidden; and on these Satan fastens. However, we may take this comfort: after
we have assured ourselves by strict
self-recrimination that the temptation by
which we are distressed is not the result
of any act of our own will, we may rest
in peace, thanking God for the pain it
reflects upon us, praying Him to make
that pain, if it be a fit, sharper and
deeper, that it may usher in an intense
hatred of self, a more vivid conscious-
ess of our own misery in lower humiliation
and greater purity of heart. Our suffering
is to be welcomed which teaches us how
dered hatred for self. In this way temptations
are turned by the Holy Spirit against them
themselves. That which in its first intention
would be the defacement, if not the
wealth of the soul, turns to chastisement, mortification and cleansing. It awakens and questions all the powers of the soul; fear, self-restraint, watchfulness, caution, injustice, shrinking from the least of pleasures of flesh, strong and persisting efforts to deaden and destroy as much as the very liability to be affected by temptations. So it was with the Suscinians, to whom St. Paul said: 'For behold this self-same thing, that ye have made sorrowful according to God, how great carefulness it worketh in you: ye suffer, ye are afflicted, ye fear, ye desire; ye are zeal, ye revenge; in all things you have shewed yourselves to be undefiled in the matter.'  

1 Cor. VIII. 11.
If you're not here, little bugger.

Fresh in the air, the.

Home without a friend, or the air, the.

Falling - although twice bigger, twice

Another year, another one.

Again to AD 1729, by Lestrange, they became

in front of me. By Lestrange, they became

almost no thing. No dirt, no dirt.

on the subject. No soil, no dirt.

Key to plain language it was a question.

Three thousand feet, by Lestrange, so it is.

Our best friend, by Lestrange, so it is, our best friend.

Nothing can account for a vegetation like

Crueller, back from Heaven to the land on.

Heavenly.

For and vegetation her Gigghig.

For this was actually, and use, there

not for this: and so, all that, so we

grand. My diary, it is a mystery to us, you.
lest us; they may distress and dishearten,
and prey upon a sinner seem to despise our
hearts; but they cannot overcome us.
The thought of satisfying His natural hunger,
and vindicating His claims. To worship by mere
the visions of this fallen world, the Kingdom
of the Earth, and the glory of them, lose
Cast like shadows on the clear brightness
g of our Lord's Spirit; but they leave us silent;
left no traces, no deposit of doubt, desires,
or inclinations. They were simply hateful,
and were cast forth with an intense
rejection; and that because they are
contrary to a holy will, which is of
higher strength than in Man.
In measure it is so in every Saint; it
May be so with us. As this will is strengthed
with energy, and upheld with the Presence
of Christ dwelling in the heart of the pure and holy; so the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, are expelled from us, and lose all share in our personal existence. This explains the various degrees of power that temptations have on various men. Some seem never mastered by them, some seldom, some often, and some always. Of this first we have spoken enough. The others will be found in two classes: one is that those who, without positive habits of sin, are also without positive habits of holiness, and those whose habits are positively wicked. When I say, those who, without positive habits of sin, are also without positive habits of holiness, I mean, such persons as are pure in their lives, honest, upright, and amiable,
but not devoted towards God. This is partly
is of course, in one sense, true, because
it is a coming "out of the glory" and
acceptance of God. I am using "true in
its popular sense, of sinful acts of God.
Now such people are open to the full incursion
of the tempter to the whole extent of that
natural Sinfulness which is in them.
This gives them a predisposition on which
he acts with daily success. They are open
And unguarded, and the will that is in
them is weak and underdisciplined; it has
no Sinful power in it, by which God
is cleared from a heart that is sanctifying
by a life of holiness. We see such people
become inconsistent, vain, fatidiculous,
worldly, and their reasoning, foreseized
for their own interests, selfish, inscrupulous,
false to their friends, their principles, their profession. We are surprised by unexpected acts out of keeping with what we believe them to be, and lines of practice without opposition to apparent duty. The key of all this is, that they have secretly yielded their will to some temptation, and converted it into their own use; and that suit to their Master. We sometimes see such people determining with a frightful intensity and speed; so much so as to make us remember how wonderfully the kept heart and preparedness of an upright heart is described by our Lord. The unclean spirit "Saith, I will return into my house, from whence I came, and sit in the place of that spirit. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh...
with him other spirits were wicked
than himself, and they enter in and dwell
there." I
The case is, of course, much more obviously
true of those who live lives of positive
indolence. They see that a man commits
an incitement to the tempter to tempt
him henceforward to that particular sin.
So that every man of a profligate life is the
subject of a manifold temptation, which
is perpetually multiplying itself. First,
he is tempted by his own heart, then by
Satan, then by consent he tempts Satan
to tempt him again in the same forms,
circumstances, and details; for by consent
he has made that his Master did. And
henceforward it becomes, as we say, a
rule of life which is so well known
of that St. Peter says of certain, that

\[ \text{S. Matt. XII. 44, 45.} \]
They have "eyes full of adultery and of sin that cease not." They have an active communion with the tempted, a mingling of will and desire with him; and the inflammation and power of such affections become a bondage through which it becomes at last morally impossible to break. And how does this differ from a possession of the devil? Is it not a possession in all the reality of fact and truth? How did Satan enter into the heart of Jesus with any fuller or more personal possession than this? How can we otherwise explain the settled deliberate career of sin in which some were led—the perfect in... penetrableness of heart and conscience into which they hold out against all stinging jeers and chastisements; as for instance, in uncleanness, fleshloose, or pride?  

2 Peter II. 14
This there is the sum of the matter: temptations are no less so long as we keep our will pure from all consent to them; whereas the consent, they become sins, and infect into our spiritual nature, and are the first admissions of that which is the end, i.e., to us less than a pollution.

And this leads to one point more — I mean, to the nature and limits of the power of temptation. First, it is plain that Satan has no power over the will of man except through itself. It must be won by self-betrayal, or not at all. This is absolutely certain, and lies at the root of the distinction between obedience and disobedience, holiness and sin. Next, it would appear.
That he can have no direct power on the affections. He must approach them, as they lie round the will, through the eye and the ear, the touch or the imagination. Through the senses, the sources of temptation are ready and direct, and all the world around us ministers to danger. Therefore our Lord was led up in His command to pluck out the offending eye, and to cut off the offending hand. The first visible objects which Satan used to tempt withal were pure creatures of God, the fruit of the tree which God has blessed. So subtle is evil. But since he gained an entrance into the creation of God, he has, through the will and looks of wicked ears, framed for himself a world of his own, full of the visible
forms and suggestions of virtue, lust, incontinency, vice, with their respective consequences. What else are idolatries, mockeries, licentious ceremonies, lying fables, uncleanness, grossness, and wars; or, again, false divinity, sceptical and refuting literature, superstitious acts, worldly seances, and the like? And these things find their way into all eyes and ears, and are quickened by the subtle activity of men already corrupt. This world of evil spreads upon us round about, and through it he inundates the quality of evil into the affections, and by them away and possesses the will.

And again: he cannot doubt that he has still more concealed ways of address, if himself to us. He is a spirit and
we are of a spiritual nature. It is impossible

to account for the actions of intellect
on intellect, and unification on unification.

There are some temptations so peculiar,
so sudden, so abrupt in their onset,
so contrary to our natural and habitual
bias, so disturbing and relentless in
their first influence on the mind, that
we can hardly doubt that the tempter
has a direct access to the intellectual
and unification powers of our nature:

for instance, religious delusions, which
he appears as an angel of light to the
deluded mind. There is, by the dictate
of man, such a thing as the direct
inspiration of the Devil, which, though
its means of working may be generally
Though the senses, we cannot doubt is also a work of direct and disembodied Soul. Such, for instance, as the unaccountable desire to commit great and eccentric crimes; sudden impulses to do things most feared and hated, occurring, with an opportunity unperceived till the impulse detected it. Now though these are extreme cases and such as we are not commonly offered to, they lay open a law, so to speak, of temptation which has place in our common life. Indeed, the direct power and agency of Satan in the imagination. It is not necessary need to go further, nor to inquire whether the images of the mind of which he seizes himself are gathered from the ideas of previous
Experience, or suggested, new and unknown from without. All that he has concerned with now is, to show that he has no hold over the will, no power over the affections except through the images of the senses and of the mind; and this is a most consolatory and a most practical truth. It shows us our perfect safety as long as the Spirit of Christ dwells in our hearts; and it teaches us where to watch against the approaches of the tempter. Let us pray there that our eyes, ears, and all senses be mortified; that the cross be upon them all; that no images of pride, vanity or lust may pass through them into the affections of our hearts; that
No illusions of this past, nor remembrance
of any thing that can kindle pride,
anger, hatred, or any ungodly passion.
May not us; that our will may
be exalted in by the will of our Leaders
Lord, who for us sancru in the
Desert. And if we be pure and true,
will crush Satan under your feet
Speedily.