

Fifth Sermon on the Lord's Prayer, by the Rev. Theodore Pitcairn, January 1947.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (Matt. 6:13.)

"And lead us not into temptation." In explanation of this phrase in the Latin Word we are in various places told that it is according to the appearance that man is led into temptation by the Lord, but in reality the Lord leads no one into temptation, this being done by the hells.

Concerning these words we read: "It was granted me to have a perception of angelic ideas about these words in the Lord's Prayer: 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' Temptation and evil were rejected by the nearest good spirits, by a certain idea perceptible within me, and this until what is purely angelic, namely, Good, remained, without any idea of temptation and evil; the literal sense thus perishing altogether. In the first rejection innumerable ideas were formed respecting this good - how good may come from man's affliction while the affliction still is from man and his evils in which there is punishment, - and this with a kind of indignation adjoined with it that it should be thought that temptation and its evil come from any other source, and that anyone should have any thought of evil in thinking of the Lord." (A.C. 1875.)

Temptations are according to man's love, and the severity of the temptation is according to the greatness of the love. A temptation is a trial of the love. If a man has only natural loves, he can only undergo natural trials or temptations: if a man has spiritual loves, he undergoes spiritual temptations. The Lord, because He had a Divine Love of the salvation of the human race, underwent the most grievous temptation of all.

Much is said in the Word about temptation, and its use, namely, that without temptation man can not be regenerated, nor can the love of self and the world be overcome, nor can the external be made obedient to the internal. The sign of the victory in temptation is that man no longer despises others in comparison with himself, but considers himself as unworthy, and regards others as more worthy than himself.

We read: "Some suppose that man can be regenerated without temptation, and some that he can be regenerated when he has undergone one temptation; but it is to be known that no one is regenerated without temptation, and that many temptations succeed one after another. The reason is that regeneration takes place to the end that the life of the old man may die, and that new life which is celestial may be insinuated; from which it may be evident that a combat is absolutely necessary." (A.C. 8403.)

If temptations are so necessary why are we told to pray not to be led into temptation? But before considering this question, let us consider what is the sign that a temptation is a spiritual temptation, for there are many natural trials which appear as if they were spiritual. A temptation is always a loss or an apparent loss of what we hold dear. The most severe natural temptations are due to the loss of those we hold dear, such as family and friends whom we love, a loss either by death, or by the breaking of a friendship, or by disappointment in perceiving that those whom we love have turned towards evil, or have turned against us. Spiritual temptations have to do with the Lord, His Word and the Church, but temptations in regard to the Lord and the Church, which appear spiritual on account of the subject, may be only natural. To illustrate: Many love their Church personally, because it is their Church, and they have been brought up in it; they love it as a natural man loves his country, namely, because it is his; thus the love of the Church has its origin in self, whether he has been brought up in it or whether he has adopted it. Such a one suffers when the Church suffers, and he suffers particularly if the Church in which

he is treated harshly or persecutes him, but this is only a natural temptation. Again, many love the Lord because He is their God, thus personally. If such find their love of the Lord or their faith growing weak, or if the Lord appears to be unmerciful towards them, they suffer, but this is a natural and not a spiritual temptation.

It is only those who love the Lord, His Word, and His Church spiritually, that is, not primarily as to person or in relation to oneself, that can undergo spiritual temptations. What are the signs of such a love?

Let us suppose that a man is deeply grieved over the lack of love and faith that prevails in the world, and he reads in "The Earths in the Universe," of the planets Mars and Jupiter where very many are in the celestial love of the Lord, and in reading is comforted and rejoices at heart that there are so many who are in such a celestial love and faith; this would be a sign of a spiritual love, which is not from person, for such a love is separated not only from the things of family and friendship, but is separated from his personal love of the Church and the personal part he plays in the Church, both present and in relation to the future. On the other hand if a man is not moved at reading about such earths it is a sign that his love of the Lord and the Church is personal and looks to self.

We are frequently told to examine our loves; but how are we to examine them? - by their effects. What is it that makes us most happy, in what do we most rejoice? What makes us most unhappy and sorrowful, what makes us most indignant or angry? If we can search this out we have an indication as to what our ruling love is, for it is particularly according to our ruling love that we are happy or sorrowful, and, when it is attacked, indignant or angry. Are such emotions felt most strongly in relation to ourselves and our own? or in relation to the Lord and the neighbor? This is a terribly searching question, if we are willing to pursue it.

Again, let a man search into his ideas concerning the internal sense of the Word; does he love these ideas because they are his ideas, ideas which he has formed for himself or adopted from others, or does he love the good and true things of the Word not from himself nor because they are his, but because they are the Lord's?

If one earnestly makes such a searching inquiry, and if, with him, there has been the beginning of some little genuine love, he will be brought into spiritual temptations, for he will find that many of the things which he thought were good and even spiritual loves were from self and looked to self.

But to return to the question, why are we told to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," when apart from temptation man cannot be regenerated. In this connection it is most notable that the Lord in His most grievous temptation in Gethsemane, "fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou." (Matt. 26:39.) The cup there stands for temptation; or, as it is said in Mark, "He prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt." (Mark 14:35,36.) And directly He said to His disciples, "Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Luke 22:26.)

While the above words are not explained in the Word, except to say that a cup here signifies falsity and thence temptation, there are numbers in the Arcana Coelestia from which the meaning can be opened. These numbers read:

"And the men rose up thence and looked towards the faces of Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them away." 'The men rose up thence' signifies the perception came to an end; 'and looked towards the faces of Sodom' signifies the state of

the human race; Sodom is all evil from the love of self. 'And Abraham went with them,' signifies that the Lord still remained with them in perception, but concerning the human race; 'to send them away,' signifies that He will to withdraw from that perception." (A.C.2217.)

" 'And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I shall do?' signifies perception.... that nothing ought to be hidden before the Lord." (A.C.2223)

" 'To send them away.' That this signifies that He willed to withdraw from that perception, is evident without explanation. The reason is also manifest, namely, that the perception from the Divine, and the thought therefrom concerning the human race that such was their quality, struck Him with horror, for the Lord's love towards the human race was so great that He willed to save all to eternity by the union of His Human essence with the Divine, and of the Divine with the Human; on which account, when He perceived that they were such, He willed to withdraw from the perception and thought thence, which is signified by Abraham's desiring to send the men away." (A.C.2222.)

This has the same meaning as the Lord's prayer that the cup pass from Him, for the Lord's grief in the temptation was not on account of Himself, but on account of the human race, namely, that they had become so evil that they wished to crucify Him; and the Lord wished to withdraw from this perception, but nevertheless He submitted to the Divine; for it was necessary for Him to be in such a perception, and thus to undergo the extreme of temptation even to despair.

The Lord was in the Human Love of the salvation of the human race; by the utmost of temptation this love was made Divine. It was nevertheless in order for the Human to wish to withdraw from the perception, but with the words, "nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou," "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." (Matt. 26: 39,42.)

This can be illustrated by wars which represent spiritual temptations. A man should desire peace and wish that there should not be wars with their cruelties and horrors; if he does not desire the cessation of war there is something wrong with him. But while he desires that wars be avoided, and as it were prays for peace, he acknowledges from the heart that wars may be necessary and he prays concerning them, "Thy will be done," that is, if they are necessary for some end of the Divine permission, he submits himself with all his heart. Spiritual temptations are spiritual wars, in which evils attack with the greatest cruelty the things of good and of innocence. Such attacks, if seen spiritually, are more horrible than natural wars, and a man should pray that they should be avoided, and yet he submits to the Divine permission, and the necessity of such violence.

The Lord's most grievous temptation was His beholding with horror the evil state of the human race, and this from a love of saving it. If a man enters into spiritual temptation, it is an image of this. In the Word and the Doctrine the state of the world and of the Church is revealed. There are three possible responses to this teaching: First, by those who despise others in comparison with themselves and take the teaching concerning the state of the world and the Church, and the evidences of this which they see, to confirm the belief in themselves as a chosen people in a Jewish sense of the word; such accept the teaching of the Word and the Doctrine on the subject, but pervert it.

Second, those who from a merely natural good, and from evidences of natural good which they see, deny the teaching of the Word or the Doctrine concerning the state of the Christian world or of the so called New Church, and call their false sentiments a spirit of charity.

Thirdly, those who from a love of the salvation of the human race in an image of the Lord, and shunning the despal of other in comparison with themselves,

as it were turn away in horror at the perception of the state of the world and the Church, but submitting to the teaching of the Word and Doctrine, say, "Thy will be done," and accept the temptation that seeing the state of the world and of the Church around them and within them involves.

"But deliver us from evil."

In the natural sense evil is something harmful that befalls us; war, death, enslavement, famine, and pestilences, are evils in the natural sense. In the spiritual sense evils are the attacks of the hells causing spiritual wars, deaths, enslavements, famines and pestilences. If a man can recognize these for what they are, he prays, "Deliver us from evil." The difficulty is that he does not recognize evil for what it is; for it first appears to be something delightful within him which makes up his loves and which is his own. It even clothes itself in appearances of good, and its evil roots are not seen on account of the appearance. Man is also under the appearance that it is something which he himself can overcome. He therefore neither stands in horror nor in fear of it. He does not from the depth of his heart pray to the Lord to be delivered from it. It is only when a man comes to see from the Lord with horror what evil is and how helpless from himself he is in resisting it that he can truly pray, "Deliver us from evil."

It is only by entering into spiritual temptations that a man can come to see what evil really is and that it is only by the power of the Lord, and the acknowledgment that the cooperation on his part is also of the Mercy of the Lord, that the power of evil which inflows from the hells can be resisted. Wherefore "Lead us not into temptation" is immediately followed by "But deliver us from evil."

The Lord alone conquers in temptation. Man of himself has no power, but he must cooperate as if of himself with the acknowledgment that the Lord alone gives the cooperation, and that the Lord alone conquers. If man believes this, the Lord in His Mercy can deliver him from evil.

Amen.

Lessons: Isaiah 53  
Luke 23: 27-46  
A.C. 760-762.