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The temptation of Jesus





THE

*A STUDY OF OUR LORD'S TRIAL  
IN THE WILDERNESS*

BY

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## PREFACE.

**I**N setting forth this Interpretation of our Lord's Temptation in the Wilderness, the writer's aim and method are very simple.

The aim is, so to read and use every indication in the Gospel narratives, that the plain facts of them shall meet the reader's imagination, and be readily related with his experience.

The Temptation is a great fact which, first and chiefly, concerns the inner experience of Jesus. To understand it, both generally and in its details, is to gain insight regarding Him; and that is an end in itself. But there is no communication of Scripture regarding God or His Son which is not designed in relation to our needs. When we are shown Jesus, it is always in such an aspect as may instruct and help us; and nowhere can this be more true than in the Temptation, where we see Jesus in relation to Satan and sin; meeting evil and the Evil one,

on His own behalf and ours, as the Saviour of men.

Each point narrated or indicated in the Temptation story is primarily and intimately related to our Lord; but, when it is told in the Gospel, it gains, in the telling, that extra meaning in which it concerns us who are admitted to the understanding of it.

The method of this Interpretation is nothing else than the keeping in view of this double significance: that of the facts, on the one hand, which concern our Lord; and that of their narration, on the other hand, which sends them on to us.

In discussing the several Temptations, the order which has been followed is that of S. Matthew's Gospel, in preference to S. Luke's. The latter order, when it puts the rapture to the Temple top after the vision of the kingdoms of the world, seems designed to end on a level which shall be close to the beginnings of our Lord's ministry. The step from the height of the Temple buildings is seen by S. Luke as a proposed emergence into publicity. Jesus is shown refusing this mode of entry upon His ministry (Luke iv. 12); and, in the narrative immediately following, we see Him choosing an



ordinary road towards His extraordinary work : “returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee” (Luke iv. 14). This contrast of the airy path suggested by Satan, and the earthly walk chosen by Jesus, is effective ; but the order of S. Matthew is plainly the logical order of the Temptations, in which they rise from the less to the greater, culminating in world-wide vision on Jesus’ part, and in dismissal on the part of His Tempter.

Critical questions and purely theological discussion have been avoided in the text. A few matters which fall under these heads, and which could not be passed over, are treated of briefly in notes which will be found in an Appendix.

A. MORRIS STEWART.

ARBROATH,

*March, 1903.*



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CHAPTER I.  
THE MEASURELESS ENDOWMENT.

*Jesus cometh from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—MATT. iii. 13-17.*



## CHAPTER I.

### THE MEASURELESS ENDOWMENT.

**T**HAT which has no mere beginning has many beginnings ; and such is the life of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word," says S. John on the first page of his Gospel, feeling it hard to profess to begin the life of Jesus. We love to linger at the beginnings at Bethlehem. We are alive to the "beginning of miracles" at Cana of Galilee ; and the preface to the Acts makes of all the ministry of Jesus one beginning of a work which heralded a splendid continuance.

Among the beginnings of the perfect life a chief one is the Baptism of Jesus, which separates His private youth from the short public ministry of His manhood. In approaching the study of the Temptation in the Wilderness, our way lies by the Baptism at Jordan. These two cannot be separated ; they are parts of one whole. The Temptation is not only related to the Baptism as being its immediate sequel in point of time, but

also as its necessary consequence. The Baptism at Jordan was the occasion of the Temptation in the Wilderness. The Temptation was, in a sense, the completion of the Baptism, in which the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus and was given to Him in a measureless communication. It was because of the unique mission which was sealed in His Baptism that Jesus was led into His singular trial in the Wilderness. It was because of His measureless equipment for the unexampled task of men's salvation that the Tempter sought Him in the desert and waged war upon His sinlessness.

At this central point in our Lord's life we naturally look backward in it, with an endeavour to understand what had been His past relation to sin.

Jesus had lived through childhood and youth a pure, perfect life in His village home. He knew what sin was from God's word of record, law, and prophecy ; and He saw its baneful effects all around Him. Jesus knew what sin was, far better than any other man did ; for He viewed it with sinless eyes, undimmed by the unholy darkness that obscures the sight of every other man. He felt it, too, with the keen sensitiveness

of response and recoil which could belong only to perfect purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart," for they see God. Blessed also are they because they see sin, undeceived by inclination or any glamour, and hate and turn away from it. Only those who fully see God with pure gaze can truly know evil, and, detecting its nature beneath disguise, can escape the snare of its guile.

But we are not told the story of that early life. Only once is the veil lifted, when the child, now grown into a lad of twelve years, was taken to Jerusalem. And this short glimpse shows us already a clear consciousness of moral and spiritual relations. The boy who went straight to the Rabbis in the Temple and questioned their astonished pedantry, must early have faced the facts and problems of evil; and His life must have been full of everyday opportunities for sinning, very much as ours is; only, they were so differently met.

The coming of Jesus to the Baptism of John is full of meaning. He was a man apart; and He knew it. Hitherto He had lived apart; not in the desert, as John had done, but in a far more real separation from the world. But now

He makes a move towards His fellow-men, and seeks a new relation with them. This motion of Jesus towards men was fraught with consequences ; the Temptation in the Wilderness was among the first of these ; but His whole ministry arose from that walk in which He *came from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him*. In this, indeed, He began His ministry. The coming of Jesus to Jordan marks the attitude of desirousness on His part to join Himself to the affairs and life of men. John's Baptism of repentance is a movement for righteousness which makes the point of contact that He seeks. Are men seeking righteousness? Then so, too, does He in every moment of His life, with every impulse of His heart ; and He will join them in their quest. Will men draw near to God? This is the constant motive of His life ; He will go with them to aid their progress with His presence and the impulse of His pure desire.

In this emergence to consciousness and purpose of the impulse to go *with* men and *for* them in the quest of righteousness we may find the call of Jesus to His mission of salvation for the world. It was not enough that He should live among men, "holy, harmless, and undefiled ;" the pulse of the world must beat in His heart ;

the affairs of men and their Godward aspirations and endeavours must be His own if He would help them. Till this was accomplished, the relation of Jesus with His kinsmen of Israel was not complete. His Baptism at Jordan was the beginning of the road which led to Calvary. And the beginning was already a shadow of that end; in it Jesus did for Israel some part of that fulfilment of all righteousness which on the Cross He finished for Israel and all the world.

The lesson of this for us is, that isolation is not the way to work and usefulness; to the attainment of influence upon men. Isolation has its use as a preparative, in our experience as in that of Jesus. But if it be like the separation of His long youth, it will, like His, be fruitful of the impulse towards a relation with others in which we may help them. When we see the Son of God go to seek the Baptism of John, we learn that it is not the will of God that His children should stand apart from the movements of the world; but rather that after His example they should take part, even in imperfect endeavours like that Baptism; and, taking part, should raise them to a new significance and efficacy. Only one Man received the Baptism of John with a perfect

zeal and resolve for righteousness; and that was the man Jesus. The shallowness of the penitence around Him did not deter Him from that step which proved to be the first step of His manhood in the way of men's salvation. It was when He went to Jordan that Jesus first took up His Cross, and we learn how heavily it bore upon Him from the very first, when we see Him tempted in the Wilderness.

We know that crowds came to John to be baptized; but crowds have tides that flow and ebb. We are sure that the Reformer had quiet hours in which he was left alone in the familiar solitude of many years; and we doubt not that it was in such a quiet hour that Jesus came to him. There is a disengaged accent about the dialogue between them which tells us thus much,<sup>1</sup> and the witness to the descent of the Spirit<sup>2</sup> is evidently given by one who saw it alone in the wide privacy appropriate to a great sign specially addressed to himself. We may therefore picture the meeting of the Forerunner and his Master in the early morning before others had awakened to a new day. Perhaps it was a Sabbath on which the vigilant ascetic was

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 32-34.

waiting by the river, and Jesus came. The purity of His presence brought an added hush to the stillness of the scene; for there is awe in the voice of John when he bids Jesus back from His Baptism, saying, *I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?*

Jesus came, and John looked on Him and saw Him as He was, unstained by sin and unmarked by conflict. His aspect was such as suited the things that were at this time behind Him in His life: the simple but thoughtful childhood, the active though secluded time of youth, in which He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>1</sup> Above all there was that subtle somewhat that marked Him as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."<sup>2</sup> When John looked on Jesus as He came, he did not see this character and aspect for the first time. When he says, *Comest Thou to me?* we judge that they had met before, and that it was a well-known and well-loved countenance that the Baptist looked upon. When we remember the intimacy that was between Mary, the mother of Jesus and Elizabeth, John's mother, who were cousins-german,<sup>3</sup> we are sure that John and Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Luke i. 36, 39.

early knew each other by report, and had each some knowledge of the other's destiny. John "was in the deserts till the time of his shewing unto Israel;"<sup>1</sup> we cannot doubt that Jesus sought him there and communed with him. Together they had learned of God's truth from His word and by His Spirit's teaching.

The Baptist knew what manner of man He was whom he greeted with that forbidding question: *Comest Thou?* Yet he afterwards definitely disclaimed foreknowledge of Jesus as the Christ. "I knew Him not," he says; and again: "I knew Him not."<sup>2</sup> He cherished the promise of a sign of the Messiah which as yet had not been given; yet he testified beforehand in that greeting: *Comest Thou?* that Jesus was different from the rest of those who sought his Baptism, so that it seemed a profanation that his unworthy hands should minister the rite to Him. We are sure that John suspected the truth regarding Jesus; but one meaning of his disclaimer of all knowledge beforehand is, that he did not trust his own intuition or judgment, or base his testimony on his own opinion. When he "bare record," it was on the authority of God's own witness to His Son.

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 80.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 31, 33.



So Jesus came to be baptized, and gently turned back the instinctive reluctance of the Baptist, that He might "fulfil all righteousness."<sup>1</sup> *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.*<sup>2</sup> The significance of this has been variously conjectured, but without satisfaction. We take it to mean that, as the rite was completed, Jesus left the Baptist with a marked haste. This Man waited for no word of absolution or exhortation such as others sought from him. He looked upwards as one who saw someone greeting Him. He went towards the river-shore with the steady gaze and purposeful step of one who answered a beckoning. John, awestruck, felt that Jesus was summoned from his side by a Presence which, though unseen by him, was recognised by Jesus. The Baptist noted the rapt expression of His countenance, which S. Luke interprets as communion with God, "prayer;"<sup>3</sup> and as he watched the footsteps that seemed to go with a glad haste, and as he lifted his eyes in the direction of Jesus' gaze: *Lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, in a bodily shape,*<sup>4</sup> *like a dove, and*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Luke iii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Luke iii. 22.

*lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*<sup>1</sup>

It was the eye of Jesus that first and fully saw the Presence and greeting that came to meet Him; so that He left the Baptist in the waters of Jordan, as it were, with eager hurry to meet a visitant. We may judge that the vision of Jesus was not shared by John. His eye and ear apprehended the approach of God's Spirit directly: His heart understood without mediating symbols. What John saw was an interpretative sign, and what he heard was an explanatory voice; and by means of these he was enabled to share the significance of the salutation which came to Jesus alone.<sup>2</sup> The voice which spoke to Jesus a full announcement and assurance of His sonship<sup>3</sup> gave to John the message of his witnessing,<sup>4</sup> in which he "bare record that this is the Son of God."<sup>5</sup>

The "bodily shape like a dove" is familiarly and rightly apprehended as a symbolical sign.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John xii. 30, "This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes."

<sup>3</sup> Luke iii. 22, "Thou art My beloved Son."

<sup>4</sup> Matt. iii. 17, "This is My beloved Son."

<sup>5</sup> John i. 34.

Its meaning regarded the character and mission of Jesus, which were purity and peace; and its meaning was addressed to John in order that he might witness to Messiah, and that with a new understanding of His Spirit. He had used the language of strong denunciation to Israel; he had spoken of Messiah as coming with a "fan in His hand" to make a sifting wind, and as ready to judge, and "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."<sup>1</sup> John had been a prophetic flail, beating Israel upon the threshing-floor of repentance; and now there was shown to him the Sonship of the lowly Jesus; and the quality that was sealed on Him from Heaven was gentle holiness. When we hear the Baptist tell, "I knew Him not," perhaps we hear his accusation of himself, in which he confesses that he ought to have known beforehand the whole truth about Jesus; but his own hard spirit had been slow to believe all that his heart had told him of Him who was "harmless and undefiled."

The Spirit of purity and peace descended thus upon Jesus; but His coming was not only upon Jesus, but also *into* the world and *for* all men. We must bear in mind both of these aspects of the descent, as we go on to the study of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 12.

Temptation which followed it. His Baptism was a part of the fulfilling of all righteousness by Jesus ; it was also an act of repentance on behalf of Israel and the world beyond. So, also, the descent of the Spirit was for the cleansing of the world by God ; in it there was loosed upon earth the flood of those waters of Heaven which are spirit and fire.

CHAPTER II.  
THE WILDERNESS.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness  
to be tempted of the Devil.—MATT. iv. 1.*

*And He was with the wild beasts.—MARK i. 13.*

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WILDERNESS.

**I**T is a fact which has been proved in the experience of many men, that the way to which God's Spirit beckons lies often past the mouth of Hell, which gapes in solitary places. Thus it was with Jesus. He "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil."

If we rightly interpret the silence of the Gospels regarding His youth, and if we read aright His aspect as John saw Him come to Jordan, the life of our Lord now passed was a time of growth and waiting, in which He had been aloof from affairs and "separate from sinners" in an external sense as well as inwardly. But now there had risen up within Him a new impulse, which He expressed to John as a resolve to "fulfil all righteousness." This purpose of Jesus was met by the Father in the descent of the Spirit, which brought Him a measureless en-

dowment.<sup>1</sup> Now He was rapt from John's side, wearing the intense, abstracted look of one who answered a greeting and went to meet an unseen Presence; and without pause His steps were directed away from the haunts of men and towards the Wilderness. In the vivid language of S. Mark: *Straightway the Spirit driveth Him forth.*<sup>2</sup> This gives the more true psychology of the movement towards the Wilderness; for we are told that the Spirit descended upon Him, and remained on Him.<sup>3</sup> It was not an outward constraint that *led* Him away: the impulse of the Spirit was now within Him, and possessed and ruled Him with an inward grasp to which He yielded gladly.

The obvious note of this experience of Jesus is the note of *isolation*. He was led, even driven apart. His inward separateness, which He always had, was not enough: that was a moral separation from the elements of imperfection and evil which were around Him; this was a separation in order to a definite exercise of spirit and ordeal of character. His accustomed apartness was consistent with many links of human kinship and sympathy, with much intercourse of common interest and kindness. He who brought the

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 12.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 33.



message of the Father's love could never be alone as a Man among men.

John had sought the Wilderness from his youth in order to the imperfect attainment of what Jesus had in perfection, even while He mingled freely with His fellows. It was a different necessity which drove Jesus into solitude, from that which denied the social life to His Forerunner. It was not that He had need to keep His hands clean from the sordid soiling of gain, or His lips from words that might be hasty and unkind or false or any way injurious ; nor that His heart needed to be retired from the reach of stains that might sully it, nor that His feet must be removed from paths where waywardness might stray into the snares of common life. Nor was it that the severities of nature's wildness might ennoble His spirit and strengthen His will for lofty purposes. These were the ends that were sought by John, as they had been sought by many who were lesser than he among the prophets. But it was different with Jesus. He was driven to the Wilderness for the enacting of a drama which no eye might see save Heaven's. The theatre of this Temptation must be solitude. This is the explanation of the rigid solitude into which Jesus was driven by the Spirit of God.

While remoteness is the keynote of each of the Gospel notices of the Temptation, the locality to which Jesus "was led up" is not precisely indicated. Tradition points to the desert in the neighbourhood of Jericho, and calls it *Quarantania*, the place of the forty days. A symmetrical, and perhaps also a sentimental, suggestion is that the scene of our Lord's trial is to be found in the wilderness of Sinai, where Israel received the Law. But we must be content without determining the exact place. "The desert" is meant to designate a solitary, wild place; a "howling wilderness." And S. Mark, in his short notice, finds room to say: *He was with the wild beasts.*

When Jesus went into the Wilderness, He left John behind Him; but He did not merely turn His back on the Baptist and Jordan. It is more remarkable, that when He was led away by the impulse of the Spirit's fresh-descended power, it was not to the midst of the crowds who had thronged to John; not to the streets or Temple of the Holy City, not yet to the populous districts of Galilee. The solitary wildness of the desert place stands in contrast with all these. The Fore-runner had already published far and wide the news of the approaching kingdom of God; his voice had stirred the whole land with its message

of condemnation of the past and of hope for the near future. But the time for our Lord's open commencement of His public work was not yet quite come. His preparation was not completely finished.

It is to be noted that Jesus did not go forward to His ministry straight from the Baptism of John and amid the enthusiasm of the Baptist's following. He was borne into His work on no wave of popular excitement, but came straight from solitary conflict with evil and a lonely communing to which He was led by the Spirit of God. This marks that His work was directly heaven-born, and not the mere outcome of what preceded it. It drew its inspiration from the source that moved the Baptist, but did not borrow from the Forerunner. The source was with Jesus.

The Temptation with the preceding Baptism creates a gulf in our Lord's life and experience, by which His ministry is cut off from what went before it, and the depth of that gulf is as deep as the heart of God, out of which came salvation for men.

We readily see that the isolation and temptation of Jesus on the eve of His ministry was a leading of God, which is full of a significance

peculiar to His own personality and special mission. But also it is typical of human experience.

In the life of each man who fully comes to manhood there is a line which marks off his youth from his maturity. Others may not see it drawn, for this commonly happens in the wilderness. This is the emergence into clear light, of individual responsibility and settled purpose; and often the demarcation, though unnoticed on the surface, is a deep score on the living heart beneath. Perhaps, also, it is the case that all those whom God leads to special work and usefulness have their wilderness into which they are led, and in which they are taken apart from other men in order to be alone with God and the Devil. There they are called upon to choose between right and wrong; also to settle what is right for them, and what is not allowable in their case whatever it may be for others.

In every life there is a season, the season of youth, in which temptation is a specially important element. Temptation may not be lightly sought; for we are taught to pray that our path may be averted from it. But its experience comes to all men; and when we come into it, we may not merely wish it gone or hurry past the season of

its trial. The hardness and soreness of temptation are not its chief features; the great thing about it is its use. The momentous character of temptation lies less in its being an opportunity for evil, than in that aspect in which it is an opportunity for good. It is an occasion for victory, an opportunity for being strong in God and growing stronger.

The fear of everyone regarding temptation ought to be, lest, having come to us, it should go from us without having been turned to use in this way. In the process of our life we may outgrow certain outward circumstances or inward conditions which have been instrumental in our temptation. To outgrow a temptation before we have overcome its power is an opportunity lost; and the loss is an irreparable one. In the progress of our life we may pass from moral straits and stress to ease; but there is no spiritual hope in this, unless the quiet we have gained is the peace of our victory over temptation. If we are overcome, or if we make a compromise with evil, then our quietude is a moral lethargy that presages the sleep of spiritual death.

The sojourn in the Wilderness was the prelude to the work of Jesus in the great enterprise of man's salvation. [ Every enterprise has its

wilderness. The long pilgrimage of Israel in the desert pictures what is a general feature of all the large movements which make for human progress. They may have their birth amid crowds; but whether they begin in the heart of one man or in the hearts of many men, they grow in isolation and ripen quietly and unseen before they bear fruit in the busy places of men's active lives.

As great movements in human affairs have each their wilderness, so every individual life that is truly great has its times which are filled with what seem mere delays and hindrances, and which are really preparations. We mark this in the wanderings of Abraham, the long tuition of Jacob before he became Israel; in the captivity of Joseph in Egypt, and the exile of Moses, as in the persecuted youth of David. These are ancient examples; but the experience which they represent is never old. The lesson of the Wilderness is written broadly over sacred history, and it is deeply marked in modern life as well.

The isolation and strain and conflict of the preliminary trial may vary with the magnitude of the man and of the mission which is before him. The unmatched nature of Jesus approached His

unexampled mission through the unique experience of the forty days and nights. The commission to our humble tasks may not send us far apart from our neighbours ; yet when it comes we are separated and driven aside to conflict and delay. If it be some experience of truth and righteousness which is given a man, to go and use and share with other men, often he is driven into the wilderness of doubt and distrust, till the truth that came to him unsought and without effort has seemed lost to him. Then he has searched and groped and striven for it, so that it has become his own as it never could have been, save for his temptation in the wilderness.

If it be some special work which is laid upon a man to do, the task may seem easy while he merely knows that it ought to be done by someone ; but when the call and commission come to himself, when he knows that it not only ought to be done, but must be done and that by him, —then, not uncommonly, he is driven into the wilderness of seeming impossibility and left alone with his own incompetence, there to be mocked on the one hand by what might be, and on the other by what he himself is.

When a man has seen a vision of a pattern

“shewed in the mount,”<sup>1</sup> and when the command has come, “See that thou make all things like unto the pattern,” then he is very near to the wilderness of discrepancies. The discrepancy between the revelation of Heaven and the materials of earth is well-nigh maddening; and a man may be distracted to the verge of despair by the discrepancy between the design of vision and his own poor workmanship. It is in the wilderness that these discrepancies are felt; only in painful solitude can they be harmonised. In the retirement of a deep experience every man must for himself resolve the recurring discord between faith and fact, between the perfection of his vision and the poverty of the attainment which is meanwhile possible. In the wilderness a man finds the word of God in his mouth, and the skill of God in his hand; and the worship of God is seen to be one in heaven and earth. In the wilderness the groping fingers of the mind catch the threads of method. Or, it may be, but one thread of a fabric of God’s will is let down from heaven; and from the desert of his difficulty the man takes the solitary clue of his first duty and comes back to do the first act of a long course of service, in which, thread after thread, and deed

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxv. 40.



after deed, are woven into a new robe of God's will for men and His righteousness among them.

This is what we do in our small, poor measure; and this is what Jesus in the desert did on the grand scale of His Divine humanity.



CHAPTER III.  
THE FORTY DAYS AND NIGHTS.

*Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the Devil. And in those days He did eat nothing.—LUKE iv. 1, 2.*

*And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered.—MATT. iv. 2.*

## CHAPTER III.

### THE FORTY DAYS AND NIGHTS.

FROM S. Matthew's account we might have supposed that the Temptation of Jesus was preceded by forty days of fasting,<sup>1</sup> after which the Tempter came to Him for the first time. But from both S. Mark and S. Luke we know that this was not the case, but that He was tempted during the whole period of His fast. These six long weeks were the time of the Temptation. Round them are the curtain of darkness and the separation of silence. We are not told one word of the spiritual struggle that then took place; for Jesus has told us nothing. While this is so, let us realise the fact that for six weeks He was exposed to the terrors of the howling Wilderness, and there met and fought with and vanquished a prolonged and definite onslaught of the utmost strength of the Evil one. It was a tremendous spiritual conflict, in which the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, I. p. 219: *The number forty.*

Spirit of God, in the guise and with the nature of a man, stooped to contend in mighty personal struggle with the Evil one. It is a wondrous thought: the soul that was agitated was the heart of God. This is the greatest of all mysteries: God tempted in the flesh.

It is not on a little inland lake that we can see the full force of the tempest's fury; it has not scope to gather strength there. The waves of the shallow mere are no more than surface ripples; there is no depth of agitation. Great men sometimes know a large measure of soul-tempest; for there are breadths and depths in them not found in ordinary hearts. But the agitation of most men is a very trifling thing. Our hearts are like to shallow little pools; their smallness secures them from great storm-tossed turbulence. It is on the wide ocean with its vast expanse of restless heaped-up waters that the storm can rush with the sweeping violence of potent rage. And this figure may help us to realise that the intensity of conflict experienced by our Lord was no ordinary thing, for in Him there were ocean-like expanses and depths. And these were all roused and tossed by the Tempter's strong assaults.

The source of the Temptation is explicitly

stated : Jesus was *tempted of the Devil*. This has given much offence to those who have wished to explain away Satan ; but, though safely abolished from their systems of thought, he is persistent all through the Bible ; and we shall do well humbly to recognise his presence in our Lord's experience, and also to accept the fact of his agency in our own.

Inquirers into the exact manner of the Temptation have come to various conclusions. Some questions that have been raised have naturally been directed to the form or way in which the Tempter came : whether his suggestions were inwardly presented to Jesus, or spoken by an outwardly visible presence. Ingenuity has furnished many guises to the Tempter ; but without deciding, at this stage, whether Satan was visible or invisible at one time or another, we may learn from the narrative simply taken, that he was present personally, and that he dealt with our Lord without intermediate agency. The Devil was allowed an opportunity in which to exert his fearful strength to try the Son of God. The powers of evil defied God in that wilderness of trial.

In the Temptation of Jesus we witness, on the one side, an exercise of Jesus' Spirit, in which,

with the new consciousness which was heaven-born at His Baptism, He faced the problems and trials of His mission of salvation for mankind. On the other side we witness an attempt of Hell to blast redemption ere it burst from the bud of preparation to the flower of unfolding completion, rich with the seed of everlasting life. These two aspects must always be before us in considering the recorded temptations in detail; but the one which chiefly concerns us is that in which we see, not Satan face to face with human salvation, but Jesus face to face with evil.

We do not need to know precisely how evil appealed to our Lord's consciousness. We cannot know it, even as we cannot know how evil first found a place in the good creation of God. But we have intimations of a mysterious process in the inner life of our Lord,—of a perfecting through temptation and suffering. We may witness in the life of Jesus a progressive permeation of His human nature by the Divine, through constant suppression of human desire by spiritual impulse. In accordance with this is the fact that the circumstances of the Wilderness Temptation indicate that its purpose was private to our Lord's self. It was not meant to be a spectacle



to admiring faith. It was removed from observation and transacted in all possible sacred solitude.

One great fact includes the whole of our Lord's relation to temptation: in Him evil was met by sinlessness which remained sinless. He Himself has told us this; and in the Gospels we have a picture of His character and a record of His deeds and words which show His perfectness. Yet, while we know these things, we feel that the Temptation of Jesus presents us with a great problem.<sup>1</sup> When we question about the possibility and character of sinless temptation, we may not allow any suspicion that it was an unreal thing. It was part of the work of Christ to meet with sin and overcome it; and if that work was not one of strong endeavour and painful accomplishment, then His life was not a meritorious one. It is rendered utterly mechanical unless we recognise in Him a true and human free will; a power of choice capable of weighing right and wrong, and deciding between their alternatives.

It is a difficult and supremely delicate question: whether the relation of Jesus to sin should be described as one of *Possibility of not sinning*,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, IV. p. 226: *The Relation of Human Nature to Sin: especially in Jesus.*

or as *Impossibility of sinning*: the *posse non peccare* and *non posse peccare* of the Schoolmen. The point is one that opens up a tempting field to a kind of subtlety which rarely, if ever, is a means of spiritual profit. In a sense, both of these qualities belong to Jesus; but they are His in different ways. The former, *ability not to sin*, was a practical or active quality, and was constantly exercised. The latter, *impossibility of sinning*, has something of the nature of a metaphysical basis: it is there as the metaphysical background of His life and work. We know it to be there when we feel that we dare not contemplate the abortion of God's redeeming work, even as we dare not conceive God's throne abdicated, and His universal reign subverted by anarchy.

Perhaps Christ's *impossibility of sinning* and its relation to temptation may be compared to the decrees of God in His predestinations concerning all men, and the relation of these counsels to the work of grace in men and their moral growth. Would we solve the problems that surround our Lord's holy will? Let us first solve those that beset all human will in its wondrous freedom under God. We do not doubt the stability of God's purposes, but we do not

regard them as interfering with the moral significance of human action; and we are not called upon, nor are we able, to trace the mode of their relation to occurrences, the manner of their translation into history.

In the common experience of ordinary men, conflict between the absolutely good and the utterly evil may be comparatively rare. The usual occasion of temptation in all men is rather some question of moral expediency or permissibility. The clash of moral opposites is a crude phase of the heart's life, which ought to be early passed in all of us; but the balancing of things which are in themselves indifferent, the arrangement of them in order to the attainment of moral ends,—this is the delicate task which is as long as human life. So far from the end justifying the means, the greater and more perfect the end sought, the higher is the necessity that none but stainless means be used to compass its attainment. Often in our small lives doubt and difficulty arise in this connection; and, arguing from the little to the great, we can realise that our Lord, on the eve of His ministry, had to face many a problem immense in scope and importance, and of exquisite delicacy. A world

of sinful men was before Him; all the future age of the world was in His hand. Closely environed by the material, He must achieve a purely spiritual aim. As His Father's relation to Him was vital, He must establish a vital relation between Himself and men. The inward pressure of the Spirit and the outward pressure of the great world's need combined to drive Jesus away to solitude, that He might think and plan and debate within Himself. It was in this state and situation of Jesus that Satan found his opportunity for sinister suggestion and subtle snare. He went to commune with Himself and God; and He met temptation instead of encouragement; conflict and exhaustion instead of strengthening solace.

We gain a certain light upon the way in which Jesus dealt with the Tempter in these forty days from the way in which He met the three recorded Temptations. Two of these are plainly given as examples of subtlety on the part of Satan; but in each of these cases, as in His third answer, we see Jesus simply referring the matter to the word and will of God. He, as it were, unburdens Himself of independent responsibility. There is no trace of argument in any of His answers. We are not feasted with a combat of wits when

we see the Wisdom of God meet the world's keen wisdom. Each of Satan's tempting words has an *if* in it, and in no case is that *if* answered.

The only match for perfect subtlety is perfect simplicity; and this was what Jesus displayed. Not only in the brief space of the recorded Temptations, but all through the forty days and nights, it was with the perfect simplicity of dependence upon God that He unravelled the toils of the Tempter; and with the same simplicity His perfect loyalty to God turned back the assaults of defiant wickedness.

Yet we know that in these curtained days and nights, which were alike dark with the presence of evil, the harrow of temptation entered mysteriously and deeply into the heart of the Sinless One. When we wonder how this experience could approach the pure soul of Jesus, we must remember that His life and death were alike unique in their character and meaning; even His human nature may have needed the discipline of severe effort in rising to their task.

Even for the Sinless One, the way to enlargement, deepening, and enrichment of experience and character was through temptation. Also, the way to enlargement of activity and influence

was by the same hard road. The access of God to the human nature of Jesus was enlarged by every urgent moment in which His heart recoiled from wrong and chose the good.

When we read that "He was in all points tempted like as we are," the disparity between the person and character of Jesus and our own is apt to obscure the essential similarity between His trial and ours. The likeness is to be found less in a correspondence of detail in His case with detail in our experience. It was more in the general moral conditions which were around Him, and in those particular conditions which were internal to Him in His submission. In several essential points we may trace the likeness of temptation in Jesus and in ourselves.

*First: In the conditions in which He stood.*

We may sum these up in one word: contiguity with evil. Elsewhere we see a great gulf fixed between the abodes of evil and of good. There is a throne of God, which is unapproachable by sin. But the Son of God in His Temptation shares the human condition of contiguity with evil. In the world He meets the Prince of the world. He might have stood apart; but He came not only to bear the "contradiction of sinners," but

also to meet the contradiction of *sin*, and to answer the challenge of its sovereignty.

*Second: In the moral and spiritual principles, whose character is unchanging and whose application was not varied when He met them.*

Jesus was born and lived and fought and worked and died "under the law." He came to manifest "the righteousness of God without the law";<sup>1</sup> but, while that righteousness was in Him and for others, it was not made by Him the wide basis of a singular prerogative. He took, He used no privilege of royalty, but was morally and spiritually the humble subject of God. Submitting to His will in its transcendent largeness, He also accepted those restraints and limitations which are upon men as men; and on Him they became the mundane fetters of Divinity.

The likeness between the Temptation of Jesus and ours is seen—

*Third: In the effects which flowed from His strong conflict.*

He, having the human nature, and sharing the general and particular conditions of human life and conflict, the effects of temptation within

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 21. *χωρίς* means *without* in the sense *outside of, apart from*.

Him were like the effects in us. Yet, when He withstood evil and did not swerve from righteousness, what we see in Him is unlike what we find in ourselves, as perfectness is unlike imperfection.

We may suspect that Satan holds the keys of human nature. As men in the body we are *in* the world and *of* nature ; and he is the god of this world, and Prince of its power. We may see him come to Jesus bringing the keys of His human nature. He touched each secret spring, and opened each inmost door. But he controlled no spring, he entered no door. The purpose and choice of good in Jesus drove him back. Each unsealed spring yielded to God and was grasped by His hand. The opened, inward door was open only for His approach and entry. So as Satan unlocked secret after secret and door after door of Jesus' nature, He did but receive more and more of God's power and was more and more filled by His Spirit.

In this process the afflatus received at Jordan was applied to the tempted Jesus. It had rested on His head as the symbol of beautiful purity ; now it became in a new way intimate to every channel of His consciousness and thought, and to every fibre that might thrill to emotion or stir with energy to will and do. Thus the god of



this world and Prince over nature unlocked the heart of Jesus but could not enter in. His power of the keys of men's hearts did but minister to sinlessness the occasion of enlargement in holiness; and each of his attempts to ensnare or corrupt made a new inrush into Jesus of the endowment of the Spirit of God, which was given "not by measure to Him."

This is how temptation ought to minister growth in grace and increase in holiness in all men, even as it wrought these in Jesus. The effects of temptation within our Lord were like the effects of temptation overcome in us, only perfect.

*Fourth: There were results beyond Himself that flowed from His Temptation, in respect of which also it is like ours.*

All moral processes have always results beyond the one who is immediately exercised by them; and as we best understand the effects of temptation which are inward to the tempted one, when we realise the personalness of moral conflict, so we may best understand those results of it which are beyond the tempted one when we realise the personality of the Tempter.

Behind our moral conflict we may always see the purposes of God, though these are often

meanwhile thwarted. In the conflict and victory of Jesus we see this great result : the purposes of God achieved. The defeat of Satan and the conquest of evil, these are the purposes of God which are behind all moral conflict ; and these are the results which in the Temptation of Jesus we see attained. This is the significance and effect of the Temptation of Jesus in its results beyond His own person : a battle has been waged in the world, by evil against good ; and the good has perfectly prevailed. This battle is one incident in an ancient, long war. But it is an unexampled incident, and destined to remain pre-eminent. The strength of God has now turned the tide of battle : for the first time, the King of this world is defeated on his own ground and within his own realm ; and that by a man. By this his sovereignty over men is broken ; and in this is foreseen the downfall of the reign of unrighteousness in the earth, for Jesus in the Wilderness laid the foundation stone of a new throne of God in all the world.

The three recorded Temptations may be taken as typical of what is not told, and we may believe that the record of them is given because they are such as are easily grasped by our understanding.

In presence of the whole Temptation which is thus indicated we may learn something about the relation of the sinlessness of Jesus to His miracle powers. His Temptation was a transaction between Him and Satan; His victory was a transaction between Him and God. Under shock upon shock, He held to the strength of God; He stood and withstood. In snare after snare, He cherished the wisdom of God and escaped. Against assault upon assault, He was loyal to Heaven and prevailed. His separation from evil was confirmed in each refusal to entertain its suggestions. But more: the relation of His manhood to God was not only confirmed but drawn closer. With each entrance of the will of God, the Power of God became more fully His.

When He said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,*" He grasped the secret of life; and in that hour He gained that control of life and life's processes which He afterwards exhibited in many a miracle of healing.

When He said, "*It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,*" He showed the perfect temper and spirit which God could

trust with ascendancy over nature. In Him who would not take that false step from the Temple ledge we see the Man whose hand made the meal of one lad serve for thousands of men, whose word once turned water into wine, and again blasted a luxuriant fig tree, and yet again calmed the violence of a storm with one command. The Man who refused to tread upon air is He whose feet afterwards trod the waters of the lake as if they had been dry land. Because He eschewed magic and all thaumaturgic display, nature was subject to Him. In His youth He had lived, like other men, within the boundaries of nature and subject to those laws which are the indirect restraints of God; now He was promoted to ascendancy over them, and, with the sanction of His Father, passed beyond their bounds. The continued loyalty of Jesus to the rule which He saw in the Wilderness and chose to obey was afterwards shown in this: that never till His humiliation was finished in death did He use His power over nature for His own service or convenience. He was hungry and thirsty and tired by the way, and in peril from His enemies; but always He stayed within the bounds of ordinary nature, and always refused to save Himself. By this submission, He entered into and

maintained that sovereignty over nature which was the seal of His sinlessness and the token of His perfect manhood. In the Wilderness He was tempted to prove with impious rashness that which in the years of His ministry He proved in long toil; and the powers which he would not abuse in Himself He constantly had, and used in the service of others.

When Jesus said, "*It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve,*" He led Humanity. His refusal was for Himself first; but, in the end, for all men. In this hour of triumphant loyalty He founded that kingdom in which He was the first perfect human subject of God, and, at the same time, King over men. There was gained in this hour His sway over men's hearts, to turn them to God—that perfect attraction which is destined to draw all men to Him.

We must not suppose that the end of the Wilderness Temptation was the end of all such experience for our Lord. S. Luke guards against this error, saying, "When the Devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him *for a season.*"<sup>1</sup> While we know the truth about this, we

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 13.

are apt to think about the life of Jesus as if it were not so. The prominence which we give to the three Temptations in the Wilderness, calling them, after S. Luke, *the* Temptation, is apt to hinder us from apprehending their true proportion, both in relation to the forty days preceding and in relation to the succeeding years.

In Gethsemane we get a closer view of the tempted Jesus than any glimpse afforded in the Wilderness. Once, also, He heard the voice of Satan in the words of S. Peter, and answered the Tempter rather than the apostle.<sup>1</sup> He rebuked the same spirit of evil in James and John,<sup>2</sup> saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Another and a most affecting notice of the persistence of the Tempter is found in S. Luke's account of the night in which He was betrayed. There we read that, in one of the last greetings of the Master to His devoted and bewildered followers, He embraced them with loving gratitude, in the words: *Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.*<sup>3</sup> It was thus that He saw His ministry as it drew fast to its tragic close: it had been temptation after temptation. And as He hung on the Cross in the darkness, the Tempter still spoke. Through the rulers and the soldiers

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 21-23.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxii. 28.

and the railing thief, he urged the insistent tempting suggestions of doubt and of possible escape : " Let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God." " If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." " If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us."

The Wilderness Temptation of Jesus was the most private of all His Temptations, and has for us the fascination of great mystery. We may not pry into its secrets, but we ought to understand its meaning. While evidently its purpose was in a special sense personal to our Lord, the mere fact of it has a great significance for us. We may see in it an epitome of His whole redeeming work for men.

In the wealth of His measureless endowment with the Spirit of God He suffered Himself to be led into the place of trial for our sake. He endured a great banishment, wherein His heavenly light was veiled. Hell strove to eclipse His brightness with its lurid glare, and to pervert His truth and thwart His love. And Hell was abashed in defeat while He came forth in calm victory. This is the story of Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness ; also it is the history of redemption in the world. For the song of salvation in all the ages is one long music with a recurring, frequent

refrain. And always in that refrain the final note is *victory*.

The Temptation of Jesus was a victory of God, *for* us and *with* us, in a battle He waged with Satan and sin. He fought *for* us that we might be delivered by His strength. He fought *with* us, as one of us, that we might share His conquest, and with Him receive the spoils of victory and enjoy the peace of God.

This Temptation in the Wilderness is but one wild stanza in the great song of Jesus' life and death on earth. In that larger song the last note, again, is victory in His rising, in which He broke the power of death. And that life and death and rising are not yet the whole of salvation's song as it shall be sung hereafter in eternity. Its music is but a part of the hymn of history, whose pulses throbbed during ages of loving promise and patient preparation.

And still that long measure is unfinished. In its larger scope, the Temptation of Jesus is not ended. The Spirit which drove Him into the Wilderness came again with a baptism for all the Church; and it has driven Jesus and His Church into the world's wide wilderness, there to be tempted of Satan and tried. And the strength of God that overcame the Devil long since is still



with Jesus and His own. He who once conquered evil *for* us and *with* us, in the end shall have a larger victory *with* us and *in* us.

Let us know, then, when we suffer sore conflict with sin, that this is the battle of Jesus waged over again and continued in us. Let us not wonder at our trial, nor doubt its end. Let us not shrink from its pain; for this is God's fight for kingship over evil, and He honours us to bear His name and His armour and to defend His cause.



CHAPTER IV.

“IF THOU BE GOD’S SON.”

*When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the Tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be God's Son . . . —MATT. iv. 2, 3.*

*Being forty days tempted of the Devil, in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the Devil said unto Him, If Thou be God's Son . . . —LUKE iv. 2, 3.*

## CHAPTER IV.

“IF THOU BE GOD’S SON.”

THE complete silence of the Gospels regarding all that passed in the forty days and forty nights is fitted to enhance our reverent sense of the greatness of what is veiled from our observation. It is enough for us to know that there was then a great contest between Jesus and Satan—a contest whose character and peculiar conditions are not explained to us. In the narrative which we have, only the outer edge of the curtain that has been drawn round the Temptation is lifted, and we are allowed to visit its closing scenes. The silence concerning the rest is specially significant, because it is the silence of Jesus Himself. He has kept His counsel, because it is not for us to share these mysteries.

When we see this, we realise also that what we are told must have come from His own lips. No fellow of the human race intruded on that sacred solitude and told what he had heard or

witnessed there. It was the Master who, when He had gathered His little band of faithful hearts, told them one day: "I was in the Wilderness, driven thither by the Spirit's fresh-descended power; and I was among the wild beasts of the desert place, being forty days tempted of the Devil. And in those days I did eat nothing." When we think of the story thus told, it gains a great meaning for us. Do we wonder at the smallness of our information? Do we wonder at the greatness of what is left untold? Nay! it may well be that we could not know that greater part, that it had heights and depths surpassing quite the limits of our understanding.

The period of temptation is described by each of the Evangelists as *a fast*. It would be natural for a Jew to connect this fast with those fastings that were familiar in his religion. But this fast was not ceremonial nor arbitrary, nor was it disciplinary. It was not even intentional. It was a result at once of the afflatus of the Spirit and of the Temptation by the Devil, and had its origin in the intense excitement of our Lord's whole being. This is indicated by the fact which S. Luke as well as S. Matthew tells, that while Jesus ate "nothing in those days," it was not till afterwards that He felt the pain and

weakness of hunger: “He was *afterward* an hungered.”

This subsistence for so long a time without food is probably to be regarded as a spiritual and mental phenomenon rather than scrutinised as a mere physical marvel. We see the same thing in the fasts of Moses and Elijah, which were of similar duration; and kindred fasts are not unknown to modern observation as occurring in experiences of a much more common sort than these. It seems that, in certain states of great mental and spiritual tension, the material body can be sustained by simple contact with the intense energy of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> This was the case with Jesus in the Wilderness when His spirit was freshly and largely touched by the Spirit of God and He was tempted of the Devil. During the eventful time, physical needs were as if suspended, and He had no consciousness of want. But at the end of the forty days a great reaction came. The excitement, nervous and mental, which had accompanied His spiritual exaltation, was gone; nature reasserted her claims, and the man Jesus sank down in utter exhaustion of body.

At this point let us think carefully of the full

<sup>1</sup> Analogous are the abnormal energy and endurance which are sometimes observed in morbid states: for example, in hysteria.

significance of the hunger which S. Matthew and S. Luke both tell of as succeeding our Saviour's prolonged fast. The onset of hunger marks the close of a super-ordinary state in which He was without food yet insensible of want. Jesus has now descended from that exaltation in which He met His unique and unrecorded trials. Its physical effects are now felt in a prostration whose depth matches the height which has preceded it. The resources of the Tempter are almost exhausted. The siege of the Saviour's soul has been relaxed, so that the tension of His trial has been succeeded by a corresponding mental, nervous, and bodily relaxment. The delayed sense of His accumulating weakness now overtakes our Lord ; and in this state of readiness to faint the Tempter sees his final opportunity ; and it is with so great a disadvantage that Jesus has to meet his last attempts to snare His faith and beat down His loyalty.

We note that in what we are told of the Temptation we see Jesus tried in the hour of His greatest weakness. This is important, because it brings His experience near to us who also suffer exhaustion and depression. The super-ordinary character of the forty days of fasting trial removes it from our sympathy, and largely hinders the



coming of definite help from it to us. Its mingled ecstasy and agony are foreign to our experience, who live on a plain level of ordinariness, which is broken by depths far oftener than by heights. But there is comfort and encouragement for us in the fact that the trial of Jesus was not confined to the days and weeks of His exaltation. He returned to the level of ordinary consciousness. He there took up the burden of great weakness, and, sharing our greatest disadvantage, He met Satan “like as we are” in our weakest moments ; and with only fainting strength He overcame temptation.

Perhaps this is one reason why these temptations, and these only, are told us : because they show us Jesus, standing on no height of vantage, but in a situation differing from ours only in the depth of His state and the direness of His straits. See Him there in the Wilderness, in the sunken weariness of six weeks’ abstinence, and compare His trial with ours, in which in health and comfort we meet temptation in the affairs of every day ; and seeing, let us know that He suffered all that we can, and immeasurably more.

To Jesus in this state and situation the Tempter comes.

*Coming up to Him*,—for that is the realistic phrase,<sup>1</sup>—he says, in the rendering of our A.V., *If Thou be the Son of God*. This should read, *If Thou be a Son of God or God's Son*.<sup>2</sup> It occurs in the same form in S. Luke's Gospel. There is an official ring about *The Son of God*, and that form has passed into our English version from theology. *The Son* is a title; and while it is not unnatural for believers to expect the title here, we may see that *God's Son* is more in place in the Gospel interpretation of the great Outlaw's address to the Son of the King. The acquaintance of the Devil with the Christ could only be of an unofficial sort.

When the recorded Temptation opens with this abrupt challenge, *If Thou be God's Son*, we hear a mocking echo of the voice of Jesus' heart and the cry that had been His since He was a young lad. "My Father" He had said these twenty years ago. "My Father" He now cried in the Wilderness when sore pressed by the Devil. And Satan took up His words saying: *If Thou be God's Son*. Further, this challenge seems to hint that, in the unchronicled time preceding, a battle had been fought regarding the

<sup>1</sup> προσελθὼν αὐτῷ, Matt. iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, II., *Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ*, p. 220.

Sonship of Jesus. Whether or not Satan professes to doubt this, the purpose of his address may well be to suggest to Jesus the doubt expressed in the *If*. . . . The moment was certainly opportune for such a suggestion. There is a strength in conflict which the conflict itself engenders. Strength is confident; but doubt is a disease of prostration. And Jesus is now prostrate after His recent exaltation. To its ecstasy there has succeeded a severe reaction. If ever He could be induced to doubt God and Himself, this is the psychological moment when that might be. *God’s Son!* How unlike that was His state! To the Devil He seemed, as in Himself He felt, only a fainting man. There He shrank, crushed and bent by the heaviest weight a man can know—the weight of utter weakness. Thus He stood, torn by the pains of forty days’ fasting. Son of God, indeed! How could such a One suffer so? Where was His strength, and where His dignity? Where was the power of God to command? “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” might well be the cry of Jesus now as on the Cross; for this was the hour and the power of darkness: this was the time for doubt.

When the Tempter says, *If Thou be God’s*

*Son*, we witness a bold attempt to come between the Tempted One and His sense of the fulness of God which had recently descended upon Him and filled Him with all strength. The exhaustion of Jesus seems to indicate a possibility that He may be severed from His fellowship with the Spirit of His Father. He is prostrate and pained with hunger: can His sense of Sonship to God and of trust in His Father stand this test of weakness and suffering? In exaltation He was full of confidence; but now, may He not hesitate?

*If Thou be . . .* The essence of this suggestion is that it would turn the eyes and the thought and affection of Jesus away from God and towards Himself. Each of the first two recorded Temptations invites Him to think about *Himself*; to assert and vindicate Himself. The third Temptation is a proposal to enrich and glorify *Himself* by means that shall deny God. Each of our Lord's replies to these several suggestions meets this aspect of them. Each is a simple assertion of God, and Him only. *God's word* is His first answer; *God's will* is His second; *God's worship* His third. Thus does Jesus look up to God and forget Himself. His Sonship does not concern Him. He is content

to rest in the Fatherhood of His God, and to let His Father vindicate His Son according to His pleasure.

There is a great lesson here for all the brethren of Jesus. We must sink self and raise God. We must forget self and remember God, and trust Him without care for self. If we magnify His loving Fatherhood, we shall not linger to look at ourselves and admire or vindicate our standing as His sons.

There is a remarkable parallelism between the saying of Satan to Jesus, *If Thou be God’s Son*, and the saying of the Serpent in Eden, “Ye shall be as gods.” The temptation is the same in both cases: viz. to make an upward reach on behalf of self—a stretch and grasp without regard to the word and will of God. Perhaps S. Paul had in view these two temptations, that in Eden and that in the Wilderness, when he wrote to the Philippians: “He thought it not a prize to be snatched, to be equal with God, but emptied Himself.”<sup>1</sup> For Jesus not only evaded doubt when His consciousness of God precluded consciousness of self and self-assertion. In His rejection of the suggestion, *If Thou be God’s Son*, we find the exact reversal of the

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 6, 7.

choice of mankind which is pictured in the drama of the Fall. To be *as gods*, men sinned: to redeem from sin, Jesus refused to arrogate the privilege of Sonship in the way to which the Tempter prompted. He looked not "on His own things, but on the things of others,"<sup>1</sup> those others whom He came to save. And always He looked chiefly on the things of God.

The suggestion contained in the Tempter's *If Thou be God's Son* is not only a subtle but also a very complex snare, because the paralysis of doubt and the impulse to self-assertion are very close to each other, both in this temptation and in the common experience of men. The note of doubt which occurs in the two first Temptations goes along with the prompting to self-assertion, which is a chief feature of all the three. This note of doubt was recurrent, and indeed persistent, all through our Lord's ministry. He did not advance Himself, but "emptied Himself,"<sup>2</sup> both here and all through His active work. And the humiliation and emptying of Jesus were an offence to those to whom He appealed. It was a cloud that darkened their sight of Him; and it would have darkened His own heart if the light of God's Spirit had been only near Him and not

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

within Him. In His poverty and meanness of surroundings, in His toil and pain, men looked at Him; and the mighty works He did made His humiliation only the more marked. God’s Son, indeed! The absurdity was plain to un-spiritual eyes. Often it must have been spoken in His ears; oftener far it was whispered by Satan in His heart. “This shall not be unto Thee,” said S. Peter: *if Thou be God’s Son*. “Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them:”<sup>1</sup> *if Thou be God’s Son*. Satan’s doubtful *If* was by no means heard by Jesus for the last time when He had answered it twice over in the Wilderness. We may learn that this was the very heart of the Temptations of “God manifest in the flesh,” when we hear how it hissed around Him as He hung upon the Cross. Satan found many to do his bidding and speak his words that day. It is his voice that we hear above the clamour: *If Thou be God’s Son, come down.*<sup>2</sup> *If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross.*<sup>3</sup> Not till the last hour in which Jesus died did Satan cease to play this snare upon His heart.

In one aspect of it, our Lord’s consistent use

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvii. 42.

of the title *Son of Man* may be seen to be a sustained answer to this Temptation in its persistent recurrence. It was important that there should be no ambiguity concerning the true humanness of our Lord's nature. It might be one design of the Tempter to commit Him to such a line of conduct as would create or confirm confusion on this point. This confusion certainly arose in the minds of many during His ministry. We find in the Gospels abundant traces of the theory that Jesus was a Son of God in the sense that Satan himself was held to be so. It was the refuge of those who, devoid of spiritual insight and moral discernment, credited His super-ordinary powers to an evil source.

The dependence of Jesus upon God, which He constantly cultivated, is one great key to the mystery of the Divine power which filled Him. His refusal to assert Himself, which is found here and all through His life, is essential to its inner meaning and secret. He emptied and effaced Himself in order to show forth God; and God answered His self-effacement, which was perfect, with a perfect filling and glorifying of His Son. It is strange that, while the New Testament so emphasises the *πλήρωμα*, the Fulness of Jesus,



recent theology should have made so much of His *κένωσις*, emptying. All that we are told of the Father’s dealing with His Son is of the nature of *πλήρωσις*, giving to Him of His fulness; and there was no conflict between the Son’s emptying of Himself and this filling by His Father. The *κένωσις* of the Son of God is seen perfectly in all His Temptations, and especially in the Wilderness and in Gethsemane and on the Cross. The Wilderness Temptation is specially instructive in this connection, because here we see the *πλήρωμα* of the Baptism of Jesus in close conjunction with His *κένωσις* before Satan. Far too much dogmatic significance has been drawn from speculation and put into the emptying. He had the fulness of God without measure, even in His bodily life: *For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*<sup>1</sup> He had fulness of Sonship, of equipment and all fitness. The emptying which we see in the Wilderness is an emptying of His human will, in order that the will of God might be fully operative in Him. His *κένωσις* is self-emptying not towards God, but in His manifesting of Himself and His powers. While filled with God’s Spirit, we see Him in the Wilderness empty Himself specially of pretensions, as He

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 9.

afterwards did, often and all along.<sup>1</sup> He emptied Himself of all that was merely for Himself. He was emptied of nothing that was of use for others or for the glory of God. Such an emptying made no emptiness; it did but make room for the fulness of God. It was the way for the man Jesus to be filled with the Spirit and all knowledge and power. And so is it the way for all men and for Humanity to be filled from God.

In an earlier glimpse of the life of Jesus, when we are shown Him as a boy in the Temple, we hear Him claim God as His Father with that marvellous simplicity which moves our heart to admiring love. He brought that faith to His Baptism at Jordan; and there, by a particular revelation and in a special sense, it was confirmed. With a new grand consciousness of this, He left His Baptism and faced the Wilderness. God was His Father: the knowledge of this was His great strength and equipment as His purpose turned towards the world's salvation and grew clearer and more firmly definite. God was His

<sup>1</sup> With much insight, the makers of our A.V. have made this *interpretation* of S. Paul's use of the word *κενόω*; but they have not *translated* it.

Father : the world was to Him His Father’s house ; His heart was filled with love and music. He was God’s Son : this was the revelation of the descending Spirit which John saw as a Dove, and of the accompanying voice. This called Jesus out to the world and to His work in it. That strength Satan sought to unnerve to weakness, that its purpose of Salvation might be turned aside to failure. That love he would undermine with distrustful doubt. That music of the heart he would change to discord. So victory for evil might be easy, and the enterprise of Salvation be prevented ere it was begun. But Jesus brought out from the Wilderness Temptation the faith and strength of heart and the loving harmony with God, which were His when He went up from Baptism with the Spirit to meet that conflict and sore trial which are the closest baptism, enlarging the gifts of God with every endeavour, and sealing their application with every choice.

The first call of the Christian life is to know God as our Father in Jesus and by His Spirit. In the confidence and joy of that knowledge, nothing else in all experience matters much. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them

that believe on His name : which were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”<sup>1</sup> If we know this sonship, which belongs to those who are born again, all else follows naturally. The low is not loved, the sordid is despised, the noble is chosen : when the fellowship of God is held, the temptations of Satan are robbed of their power. Just because this faith is the foundation of Christian life and experience and power, it is specially assailed by the Tempter in our hearts, as it was in Jesus'. But in us its confidence is too often turned to doubt and its dignity foregone. On the threshold of activity, when we are in the wilderness, it is doubt that unnerves the spirit and slackens the fibre of character and relaxes the tension of endeavour. Youth, which is the season of high hopes and purposes, is also, for many a one, the season of doubt. Youth has many a doubt as to its relation to God ; and, for the cure of this, youth has need to be among them that continue with Jesus in His Temptations. One of these has given this message to his brethren : “ Now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we

<sup>1</sup> John i. 12, 13.

shall see Him as He is.”<sup>1</sup> And this is the meaning, for us, of the Temptation, *If Thou be God’s Son*—a meaning that we learn when we see the example of Jesus in meeting it: “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 3.



CHAPTER V.  
THE SNARE OF HUNGER.  
I. AS IT CONCERNED JESUS.

*When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the Tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be God's Son, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—MATT. iv.  
2-4.*



## CHAPTER V.

### THE SNARE OF HUNGER.

#### I. AS IT CONCERNED JESUS.

**D**OUBT and presumption are the opposite ends of the one swing of the pendulum of an unsettled heart that fails to sink to rest on the central will of God. Both of these extremes are found within the compass of the first Temptation.

The hungry faintness which followed our Lord's long fast is the link that joins the recorded Temptations to what has gone before them but is left untold. We doubt not that Satan had already assailed Jesus with all his strength. Instead of assault he now essays to trap Him in a Snare. The first Temptation is the *Snare of Hunger*. The first coil of its entanglement is a suggested doubt of the Sonship of Jesus; the last is the proposal of a presumptuous

assertion of that Sonship and an unwarranted exertion of its power.

The Tempter makes Jesus a spectacle to Himself. He had been filled with a strange new consciousness of His Divine relation, and with a joyous assurance of the Fatherhood of God, to whom He was the well-beloved and well-pleasing Son. But now, in His prostrate weakness and apparent desertion— Can it be? There is derision in the accent of the question, which inspires to doubt; there is insolent challenge in the suggestion, which provokes the Son of God to verify His standing. When Jesus was thus shown Himself as seen by the eye of Satan, there was no appearance of Sonship as the Tempter understood that rank. How could it be? So the suggestion of doubt was pressed in upon the Saviour's heart, if He would but entertain it; and the impulse to assert Himself was prompted urgently. The merest possibility of doubt might be abolished on the instant, on the spot. Let Jesus but command that these stones which lie within His hand's reach be turned to bread: this one God-like act shall suffice at once to reassure Himself and to silence the taunts of Satan with conviction.

The suggestion was a feasible one. There

were the stones, and His was the power to command: one word and it should suffice. And while Satan thus pled, his plea was reinforced by the urgency of Jesus' hunger. To this also the Tempter appealed with mingled commiseration and challenge: Thou art faint and hungry; that need not be. If Thou be God's Son, Thou hast power to make the very stones around Thee turn to bread at Thy commanding word. Further, Jesus felt ready to die in His exhaustion; and the Tempter's proposal may have meant: Let God's Son preserve the life and strength of His manhood for His work as a man. In this view, our Lord's faith is here tried by the fear of imminent death; and in this aspect His Temptation is like the trial in which that "profane person" Esau<sup>1</sup> failed, when he sold his birthright for food, saying: "Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"<sup>2</sup>

The Snare of Hunger was thus a very subtle net, and widely spread to catch our Lord at one point and another. It (1) suggested the Devil's doubt for Him to convince, and (2) proposed to Jesus a doubt on His part to be dispelled: (3) it appealed to the pain of hunger, and (4) it conjured up the fear of death, which threat-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxv. 32.

ened to cut short the Saviour's work or ever He had entered on its ministry.

But there is another aspect of this Temptation that is deeper than any of these, and so comprehensive as to include them all.

We have seen that Jesus is here tempted to meet His circumstances, in His own interest, as God's Son. This is the heart of the Snare. To do so would have been to abandon the attitude of His humiliation and evade His mission of Salvation. The mission of God's Son among men was to *be* a man and to *behave as* a man; to suffer and die as a man. And here, at the very outset of His undertaking in its public phase, we see Him tempted to a course which was inconsistent with that mission and its conditions.

This deepest aspect of this Temptation, which it shares with the following one, is indicated by Jesus Himself in His reply to the Tempter. He answers, not as Son of God, but as a man. Even in His fainting weakness He takes up the burden God has laid upon Him. This Temptation is a seemingly harmless proposal to allay natural appetite by a lawful exertion of power. But our Lord sees that to acquiesce would involve a violation of the conditions under which

He is placed, an evasion of His trial as a man. Therefore He refuses to shirk the consequences of His humiliation ; He speaks as a man, and as under God's law which is for men when He says : It is written, " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The quotation is from the eighth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, where the reference is to the miraculous sustenance of Israel in the wilderness. His use of this shows that Jesus first affirms trustful reliance upon God for the supply of His necessity. He has been tempted to distrust ; and the turning of stones into bread would have been, as it were, an act of theft from God perpetrated by the Son of Man. As for His life that seemed likely to perish, the faith and understanding of Jesus were not inferior to those of His Forerunner, who had said in the wilderness of Jordan : " God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And Jesus may well have told Satan that God was able, not merely to make bread for Him of these stones, but of them to raise up a Son to Himself, to do His perfect will.

The Snare of Hunger, therefore, by which our Lord was tempted, did not merely affect

expediency; it involved principles that touched both His relations with God His Father and with the men whose Salvation it was His mission on earth to accomplish. Thus, also, the Tempter's finger pointed far further than these stones of the desert which he challenged Jesus to turn into bread. It pointed to the whole extent of His saving work, and counselled a false step which would have led to false methods in these. And the answer of Jesus was not less inclusive in its scope. We have seen (in Chapter IV.) the parallelism between the Eden Temptation, "Ye shall be as gods," and this in the Wilderness, *If Thou be God's Son*. So also we must notice that both the Eden Temptation and this of our Lord in the Wilderness are examples of the Snare of Appetite. In Eden we see men despise the will of God and distrust His word. We see them choose the gratifying of an appetite which was not hunger, but mere lust amid ample provision. In consequence of this we see them turned away from the Tree of Life. But here we see Jesus turn away from appetite to choose the way of the Tree of Life—that tree which is the Word of God, and whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations."<sup>1</sup> He chose the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 2.

higher instead of the lower, and in so doing He grasped the secret of life and healing and health not only for Himself, but for all men who should come after Him in faith. The life-giving results of this choice were shown in all His works of power and healing in His ministry ; and they are still seen working in the world, and shall be seen increasingly till the last enemy is destroyed, even death. Here, then, the choice of Eden is reversed by the Second Adam. Men had been banished from the Tree of Life by a sin of appetite and faithless distrust ; and now the way is opened for their return to it by the trustful faith of Jesus towards God, and by His refusal of Satan's Snare of Hunger.

Broadly stated in general terms, the heart of this Temptation was its incitement to put bodily life and physical interests before trust in God and obedience to Him. The miracle proposed to Jesus would have been an act of confidence in Himself instead of faith in God ; and " whatsoever is not of faith is sin." <sup>1</sup> There was no sin in a miraculous making of bread. Jesus Himself did that more than once, and fed thousands of hungry folk by the very power which He now refused to exercise. But

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 23.

on one of these occasions we see the recurrence of one phase of His present Temptation when, because He had fed them, the people wished "to take Him by force to make Him a King."<sup>1</sup> The Snare of Hunger was then once again laid by the Tempter, if haply he might catch the Saviour in its toils along with the crowds He had fed. But He who overcame temptation in the solitary wildness of the desert turned from it amid the Galilean crowd, and went His way to be alone with God.

There is a familiar saying of our Lord's, the terms of which may be best understood when read in the light of this Snare of the Wilderness: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"<sup>2</sup> There is an apparent exaggeration about these terms that requires explanation. To enforce Divine truth by contrast with evident absurdity is very unlike our Lord's calm speech. Why should He so speak who so often and so beautifully made truthful nature illustrate His higher spiritual truth? We naturally ask this; but the difficulty of these

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 11, 12.



words disappears when we find in them a hidden reference to the Wilderness Temptation of the Snare of Hunger. In this saying our Lord speaks the language of His experience in the desert; and that not confessedly nor purposely, but inspired by vivid recollection. How deeply the impression of this Snare in the Wilderness was scored upon His mind and heart, is seen by this. He remembers that He was hungry in a far-off, stony place, where there were serpents and scorpions. And in His faintness He asked His Father for bread. And the Tempter pointed to a stone, saying that in this He might find the answer to His asking. If He but took it as God's Son, whose word had power, that stone might be bread in His hand; that serpent, a fish; that scorpion, an egg. And Jesus indignantly resented the insinuation that His Heavenly Father would so answer the asking of His Son. God would not do so. If any hungry son of His shall ask bread of Him, He will give him His living word and the Spirit who is His breath. For as an earthly father will not give his boy a stone to break his teeth on, so God will not be outdone by man, but will give to His children only what is life-giving.

The Wilderness Temptation did but concentrate into a word temptations that beset our Lord through all His ministry. In all His work amongst hungry men Jesus had to avoid the Snare of Hunger which was both around Him and upon them. The Son of God, who "so loved the world," was the great Philanthropist of all the ages. His heart of love ached with the sorrows and burdens that were upon the men around Him; and as "He went about doing good," often the Snare of Hunger must have tempted Him to minister to hungry want with the power of His Divine Sonship. He who healed disease, and walked upon the waters, and fed thousands on a hillside, could have gone to the homes of poverty, and by His mere word have given plenty in the place of want. Had He done so, then He had been ensnared by Hunger, the hunger of His fellow-men. They would have made Him King because He fed them. But His throne had then been made of earth, such as might be turned to bread; and, though His crown had been of gold, it had been less the symbol of true sovereignty than a picture of the price men paid for bread; and His sceptre had never been free from the toils of the Snare of Hunger meshed round it and round the hearts

which it ruled not by the fear or love of God, but by the fear of Hunger and the love of plenty.

Jesus, who said, "My kingdom is not of this world," both said and lived the truth: My Bread is not of this world. To the poor He gave no largesse; and when He made them rich towards Heaven, He left them poor towards the world. He never touched the problem of the world's Hunger and its need for bread. God's laws of industry and honesty are written upon nature, and these suffice to meet the world's want for its own life. But the ministry of Jesus was concerned with another and a spiritual life: that ministry He steadfastly pursued, and never swerved to spend His heavenly power on less than heavenly ends. He constantly and urgently taught against the Snare of Hunger, warning men of their minds' and hearts' entanglement: "Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat;" "Labour not for the meat which perisheth;" "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; but rather seek ye the kingdom of God." By such teachings Jesus offended His hearers. They fixed and hastened His rejection. By a bread policy for others in His ministry, He might have saved His life from the death of the Cross,

as really as He might have supported it in the Wilderness by turning stones to bread to feed Himself.

The fatal operation of the Snare of Hunger is well illustrated in the history of Rome. By means of bread, Caius Gracchus filled the city with his subversive proletariat. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, gave an immense daily largesse of bread to the poor of his Byzantine capital, and handed down a very curse to those who came after him. His successors, at Rome, fed a hungry idle multitude with daily distributions of bread and meat. To food was added costly spectacles; and it was not only that the provinces were drained to glut the capital, but on a foundation of unsound finance Rome became one vast gilded theatre filled with an excited mob of dissipated sight-seers. And, with all this pampering, the empire was rotten and tottering to its fall. The Snare that Jesus rejected, the Snare of Hunger, did this fatal work. It smothered noble aspiration, strangled worthy purpose, and crippled wholesome enterprise. Out of free Romans it made ignoble slaves. To learn what Jesus rejected when, in His ministry, He cleared His footsteps of the Snare of Hunger, read the history of later Rome. The escape from

hunger and toil was almost complete; but it led to a deepening entanglement in cruelty and lust and every fleshly vice, and through these to destruction. This was the fate of Cæsar's throne, and it was the fate designed by the Tempter for the throne of Jesus. But the way of life was the way of toil for Jesus, and so it is for us.

The refusal of our Lord to deal with men's hunger was necessary; and its reason was that He came with a commission so much higher than a chancellery one, and was bent upon an errand so much harder than any ministry of temporal supplies. When Jesus refused to make bread out of the desert stones, He chose the way of life for others; and for Himself He chose the way of the Cross. When He refused to give the power of His Godhead to cut the strangling cords of the Snare of Hunger, He fixed the fate of His ministry as it affected the many hungry of Israel. For a while "the common people heard Him gladly;" but only few had any hunger for the Bread of Life He offered them; and it was because He had for men no promise of the world's bread that in the end they turned from Him and cried Him to His death. They would have crowned Him when they saw that He could dine them every

day ; they crucified Him when they knew He would not.

“ If Thou be God’s Son, command that these stones be made bread.” This is a cry of men to Heaven till this day. As Satan derided the ungodlike aspect of Jesus and His helplessness to help Himself, so do men now speak the language of the Tempter. Amid a world of stones and dead things, He is challenged to show Himself a God after the likeness of the unworthy thoughts of unspiritual hearts. Still He is in the world, the very picture of self-defenceless love ; and still He is tempted in “ His body, which is the Church.” He is the Son of Man lifted up ; and men cry to Him, “ Who is this Son of Man ? ” If He be God’s Son, let Him prove His Sonship ; let Him give us bread and save our toil ; “ let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him ; ” “ let Him save Himself and us.” And this is the answer of Jesus to hearts ensnared by Hunger : “ I am the Bread which came down from Heaven : I am the Living Bread.”

CHAPTER VI.  
THE SNARE OF HUNGER.  
2. AS IT CONCERNS US.

*When the Tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be God's Son, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—MATT. iv. 3, 4.*



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SNARE OF HUNGER.

#### 2. AS IT CONCERNS US.

**I**N the broadest view, this Temptation concerns the control of physical impulse by moral effort; the suppression of appetite; the subserviency of material need not only to spiritual power, but also to spiritual purposes and ends. In human experience, the claims of animal life constantly assert themselves in opposition to moral principle and spiritual expediency; and the answer and example of Jesus in His Temptation teach that we must deny even the most urgent claims of physical life and material things, if these oppose themselves to the word of God and His will.

Bread is an appointed means of physical life; but it is only one implement among many in God's hand. From the mouth of God came man's breath at the first; and from His mouth can come

his sustenance without bread. Jesus trusted God for that ; and, if need be, so must we ; for this is the secret of the life that cannot die. Physical life is not the whole of life. It is not first in importance even now ; it shall not be last as the goal to which we shall attain. To teach this was one great aim of Jesus in His ministry ; to realise it is the task of faith ; to live worthily according to that faith is the calling of the Christian life.

That faith and that life are hard to men. The Snare of Hunger besets every man ; he is born within its toils and trapped by its deception before he knows good from evil, or can judge between his right hand and his left. It is fitting that, among these typical Temptations which Jesus suffered and overcame, the first should be this one in which Satan points to earth's stones, saying : Of these make bread. The world is full of stones ; the world is made of stones. And man, though made of earth, *has life*, and his life needs bread ; and the problem of ordinary life is : How to turn dead stones into bread for life. Round the need of bread centres the interest of every day. To work for it, we give our hours and days and years. How eager are all men about bread ! How great is that quiet earnestness that never slacks from the endeavour to secure and enlarge

their livelihood! Men have a higher life than the beasts; but human life is little more than a disguised ravening; and, though wits and handiwork take the place of teeth and claw, the fight for bread is often as keen and cruel among men as it is among the beasts that tear each other for their prey.

When Satan pointed the hungry Jesus to those stones, he saw not only the hunger of the Son of Man, but the great hunger of the world which Jesus shared. When he said, Satisfy that hunger by the power of God, he tempted Jesus, as he tempts us also, to revolt from the conditions under which the life of man is lived; for it is ordained that by *work* earth's stones shall be turned to bread, and not by *words*. That law is written over all nature, whose life each man shares for a while, till, with the rest of nature, he too must die. We may not, cannot live by our own word. Our work and God's word: these are the conditions of life for us. The Snare of Hunger is upon us every time our heart revolts against the necessity of labour and the hardness of toil, and every time our weakness cries out against the burdens laid upon its faintness. We escape that snare only when we take toil and heaviness as the will of God for us, and seek

His strength to do and bear, and trust His love to save.

On the level of practical considerations, bread means life to us. Jesus sought to raise men's thoughts to a higher level than this. When He urged them, saying, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat," He added the profound and important dictum: "The life is more than the meat." This *more* is not merely *more important*; it means that the meat is not a sufficient cause to account for the life which it sustains. The meat seems to touch and feed the life directly; but no—man does not live by bread alone. Something else comes in between the bread and the life—something without which it could not feed the life of man. What is that? It is *the word of God*. It is true, in ordinary life, that we do not live by bread alone, but by bread *plus* the word of God, which makes it efficacious for the sustenance and increase of our life. Our complex physical frame, with all its mysterious chemistry and mechanism, is the product of the word of God, and is maintained by the word that continually proceedeth out of His mouth. His word is our life; and, in everyday feeding, the life is more than the meat.

In the pitifully common experience of disease

we see plainly that man does not live by bread alone. In diseased conditions, the life is there, and the bread is there; but the bread may be useless for sustaining the life. The health-giving word of God, which was so abundantly in Jesus, is wanting: without that word there is no link between bread and life.

Our Lord's dictum, "The life is more than the meat," may be read as a commentary on His quotation: "Man shall not live by bread alone." Israel proved this in the wilderness; and if we will but see it, we prove it every day: we live by the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. To know this dependence is to learn one great lesson of godliness; and to embrace it cordially is to find that contentment which, with godliness, is the greatest of all gains.

The answer, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*, has a greatness which not only meets the varied aspects of the Tempter's guile as these concerned the immediate situation and circumstances of Jesus,—it has a meaning that reaches far beyond these, and contains an essential part of spiritual truth. Man's life, it says, is found in union with God; and for bread, that life requires Divine truth, which must be

received in a spirit of acquiescence, by a heart in harmony with the Divine will. This is the life of filial obedience; and it was to be exemplified in Him who came to fulfil all righteousness. Gifted He was with miraculous power, but its purpose was definite. It was not meant to minister to His own wants, and never could be used to procure release from suffering or escape from difficulty. He saved others; Himself He might not save. Therefore, though the Tempter's suggestion was plausible and very attractive, the Lord's pure heart and calm eye detected its hidden guile; and He answered it with a reference to principles that guided Him and must also control us. These Wilderness Temptations are indeed typical ones. They are understandable by us; and more, they are such as we share. And often Satan addresses wiles to our mind and in our circumstances that are like those Jesus tells us of; and these must be met with the same weapons of Truth that He used to disarm the Tempter of his power.

The toils with which Satan beset Jesus, alike in the Wilderness and in His ministry, are still the snares with which he would entangle the Church of Christ in the world. This is true, on the large lines of human policy.

The world is still hungry; and there is set before us the temptation to deal with hunger rather than with sin. This is a latter-day temptation, belonging to this age of much philanthropic endeavour; and many are ensnared by it. Its error is to look to economic and social reforms for results that can only come by spiritual means. There are many, to-day, who have a zeal for good which is not according to Gospel knowledge. They have a great hope in Acts of Parliament; or, it may be, in Trades Unions for the protection of wage-earners; or in education and the diffusion of culture. The cheapness of bread is more important to them than the "free course" of God's word. Realising the evils of poverty and all misery, they set themselves with a great directness to their alleviation.

We know that all just laws and all kindness and true charity are the will of Christ. But we must know and remember that the world might be nothing the better, but rather grow worse, though the very stones of our streets were turned to bread to feed men's hunger. Social reforms *in* themselves may be good; *by* themselves they can be no more than superficial. They are pleasant unguents, that do but lightly heal a wound that festers deep below the surface. At

the root of every social sore is sin. And sin is a moral disorder which has a spiritual source, and which must be dealt with by spiritual means. To every sound scheme for social improvement and every philanthropic enterprise the Church of Christ is bound to give her support in the name of the good Physician and the God of Love. To all beneficent and reformatory legislation let her lend her influence in the name of the God of Righteousness and the Prince of Peace. But these things are not her first concern: their advancement is not her mission, by whose success or failure she must stand or fall. That concerns the individual hearts of men in their personal relation with the Spirit of God and His word. In this, the message of Salvation is one that goes to the heart of every wrong the world knows, and to the source of every woe she suffers. The strongholds of injustice it does not assail with the strength of present judgment; the bars of hungry slavery it does not unlock with the key of Reform. But it undermines the foundations of sin, upon which every wrong is based; and though meanwhile it has no word for many a hardship, one day even the great world-snare of Hunger shall be broken. Yet not by force, nor by law; but by love.



Not only are we tempted to err in the large matters affecting policy and the lines of conduct in Church and State,—we stand where Jesus stood in the Wilderness when, in our personal experience, we meet the inducement to sacrifice moral and spiritual obligation for the sake of material gain or for any alleviation of physical straits. It was to such a sin that Jesus was tempted when He was hungry, and might have eaten save for the restraints that God had laid upon Him in His mission to mankind, and which He accepted as one born under the law of God, and subject to the burdens of Humanity.

When Jesus says, *Man shall not live by bread alone*, bread is the symbol of physical life and all its accessories. These are not all, says Jesus. Though a man have them to the full, yet he does not fully live on that account. “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”<sup>1</sup> The beasts live by bread alone, because they have only lower wants to be satisfied. Man needs bread, but not bread alone: his higher life, his moral and spiritual nature and capacities, must be provided for; their needs have an importance which is far greater than that of any mere physical want. Their

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 15.

supply is the first requirement of human life ; and it must be placed first, if that life is to be rightly lived.

The right arrangement of the order of precedence of the spiritual, the moral, and the physical levels of life is the commonest requirement of ordinary duty. It is the lack of this order that makes thieves and drunkards and all unclean livers and misers ; also it makes careless and irreligious folk. The thief puts the satisfaction of material possession above those moral considerations that are most jealously guarded by society as necessary to its life. The drunkard prefers his indulgence to domestic duty and social decency. Persons of unclean life are tersely sketched by S. Paul in terms of this disordering of the several levels of human nature : "Whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."<sup>1</sup> They make a religion of lust ; they have inverted the order of nature and religion, and pursue a course which is downwards and away from God, and towards destruction.

A place above those who thus disorder the physical and moral levels of life is occupied by those who accept the moral platform of human

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 19.

living and observe the conventions and restraints of common law, yet place the physical life and material advancement above spiritual interest and obligation. The thief and drunkard and unclean offend by pursuing physical and material interests, without reference to spiritual possibilities and privilege and responsibility. The sin is, in essence, the same in both cases; though the one class sins on a lower level than the other. The lower class are beast-like in their relation to the physical elements and accessories of life. The higher class are human because moral, but ungod-like because unspiritual. Both classes deify the body and are deaf to the "word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," which is life to the soul. The true man, the man that Jesus was and that Jesus came to make of others, is the man to whom and in whom the spiritual is paramount. He does not live by bread alone, or chiefly, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The example of Jesus when He says, *Man shall not live by bread alone*, is a dissuasive from any violation of principle for a temporal advantage. That dishonesty which disobeys the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," is only one gross form of such sin. Probably the evil eminence

which that sin has amongst us is owing to its offence against our neighbour rather than to its disloyalty towards God. But dishonesty, which violates human law, also denies the providence of God. There is a will of God which determines our temporal circumstances. Under that will Jesus placed Himself for our example ; and, though He had power to control His circumstances, He denied Himself its use in order that He might be obedient and suffer conditions which were like to our own, even when these are very hard.

Our powers of resistance to the grasp of circumstance are very limited. We can hardly interfere at all to alter materially the conditions in which we are placed by God. But the deepest faults are those of the heart ; and in spirit we yield to Satan's Snare of Hunger when we are filled with worldly desire and calculation and anxiety. We are snared by this world's stones when we fail to obey Christ's injunction, " Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; " and when we fail to trust that promise with which He points to lower goods, " All these things shall be added unto you. " <sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of God, in the Gospel, for every believing heart, that He should bring us forth of earth's shadows

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

into the sunshine of unclouded trust ; that, amid the snares of Satan and the seductions of sense, we should enjoy the untrammelled liberty of a disembarrassed faith ; that, whether in the solitary wilderness or jostling in the city's crowd, we should have an unencumbered heart, ready always for activity and praise. This was life as Jesus knew it when He said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* ; and the knowledge of this life He sends forward to us in the tale of His Temptation and His victory.

It might seem as if the super-ordinary Sonship and power of Jesus to which Satan appealed were an element in His trial which removed it from all real likeness to any temptation we can know. But that is not the case. The super-ordinary powers of Jesus were held by Him from God, to use for the salvation of men. And "the power of God unto salvation" is in the hand and mouth of every believer. And this greatest gift of God to men may be abused by us, who hold it by His grace. In a deeper aspect than the surface shows, the Temptation of Jesus was less a temptation to turn stones into bread than one *to turn bread into stones*. The word which He was tempted to use for the satisfaction of His hunger was the word

given Him to use for the salvation of souls by turning them to God. Thus He was tempted to spiritual malversation, to the misappropriation of a heavenly inheritance. And thus are we also tempted : to make the spiritual gifts of God, and His heavenly grace, yield only a temporal satisfaction. If we take the love of Jesus, and His power, and all His salvation in the selfish hand of an unhallowed heart, if we use these for any lesser end than His end, then we *turn bread into stones*.

There is a great beauty in the Gospel ; but it is not meant merely to decorate our life withal. There is a wondrous music in the word of love ; but its errand is not to charm our ears and soothe our mind and heart with the sensuous satisfaction of a selfish peace. There is a marvellous wealth in the heritage of those who are the sons of God ; but it is not theirs to make life easy and opulent, nor to dignify it with any proud nobility. We turn the Bread of God into the stones of earth when we take Christ's salvation selfishly ; and when with it we build any temple which is not for the worship of God, or furnish any chamber which is not for the service of His Christ. If, as Christians, we build with spiritual stones that which is not spiritual, then our own souls, and those to whom we should have ministered salvation

in the name and by the word of God, are starved. For we have turned bread into stones when we have used the word of God not according to His will ; and we have been caught in the snare of the world's hunger for " the meat that perisheth."

The fact is, that the sins of turning bread into stones and of turning stones into bread are sins that always go together in those who abuse the Gospel instead of using it. We have seen that Jesus was appealed to as God's Son, and tempted to use the power of His Sonship unlawfully. In a particular aspect of our experience we are tempted in this way too. The Tempter's " If Thou be God's Son " contains a reference to the recent Baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit of God. And there are snares which beset us in the very hour of our assurance of God's love and of His reception of us as His sons. We are sons of God in Jesus ; in Him we have eternal life ; so we cannot perish, says the Tempter. The very stones of earth shall feed our souls, because we are the new-born sons of God : they are not spiritual, indeed, but in our hands they shall be changed to such a character that they shall feed our souls.

In this we are tempted to turn from reliance on the word of God to dead, earthly things, and

to take them up with a vain self-confidence that presumptuously prostitutes the grace of God. We may make stones into bread by trying to feed our hearts upon the things of earth. The world's work may replace the work of God ; its words may silence God's word within us ; its pleasures may be used to yield us satisfaction of the empty need that only God Himself can fill. And so we may be starved in our soul while fictitiously fed upon things that are stones and not bread.

We are in danger of this ; and God is better to us than our own heart's desire or asking. Many of the disappointments of the Christian's life may have this explanation : that he has desired things of this world instead of spiritual gifts, and has asked stones instead of bread ; and God has denied him his desire for temporal fulness or advancement, in order to give him that which is of everlasting worth. Even if we ignorantly ask Him for stones, He will disappoint us with the gift of bread. God, who is the Author of life, does not ask us to give life to what is dead. Therefore let no dead thing delude us. If the Tempter point to earth's stones, saying, 'Take them as God's sons and live by them, let us turn from them, and still trust God and ask from Him. And, asking, we shall receive, for "If ye being evil know how to



give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? ”

When Jesus asserted that man should live by the word of God, He spoke for Himself as a man, but also for all men who should come after Him. When we hear Him speak thus, we may hear Him say, Man shall not live by bread alone, *but by Me*. He who was tempted is the Word of God. When we see Jesus in this Temptation, we not only see a man choosing the way of life for Himself and others,—we see Him who was the Life opening the way of life amid the snares of death ; Himself walking that way, that He might show it to us. “In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men.” By Him men shall live with a life that bread cannot feed, and that starvation cannot touch that it should die.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SNARE OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION.

*The Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be God's Son, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.—*  
MATT. iv. 5-7.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SNARE OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION.

**I**N the first of the three recorded Temptations of Jesus in the Wilderness, the Tempter appealed to our Lord on the level of the common needs of Humanity, which He there suffered in an exaggerated degree owing to His circumstances of recent strain and present great exhaustion. In that Snare of Hunger our Lord's whole state and surroundings have been made to speak a powerful inducement towards an unlawful act. And that appeal has been resisted and turned into an occasion of witness to that higher life which is beyond the need of bread and is sustained by every word of God. The occasion and materials of that Temptation were within Jesus and around Him as He stood, hungry and faint, in the Wilderness of stones.

The second Temptation is very different from the one preceding it. It is a mark of the Tempter's art, that he embarrasses the Tempted

One with a sudden, vivid change in the scene and nature of His appeal. From the Wilderness he takes Him to the Holy City, and, placing Him on a high point in the Temple buildings, invites Him to throw Himself down from it, in reliance on the power of God and on His care to safeguard Him from injury.

In the statement, "The Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City," the phrase more exactly rendered is, "carries Him off;"<sup>1</sup> and it suggests possession of our Lord's person, forcibly used for His passive conveyance from the desert to Jerusalem. The same suggestion is found in the phrase "setteth Him"<sup>2</sup> on a pinnacle, which represents Jesus as passively at the Tempter's disposal.

By many, this has been felt to be a matter of some difficulty; indeed, it must be such to all who read the narrative thoughtfully. And it is not unnatural that there should be an inclination to regard the transportation of Jesus as an imaginary one, in which the scene was vividly presented to His imagination and will, as one that He might seek at another time, after He had left the Wilderness in the manner in which He had come to it.

<sup>1</sup> παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν.

<sup>2</sup> ἵστησιν αὐτὸν.

We ask, then, was our Lord carried really and bodily to the Holy City? That is the statement of the Gospel, simply taken; and we may believe that He was. It is contrary to all the possibilities of everyday life; but that need not stumble us. We live within a circle of nature, where natural laws both seem and are to us irrefragable. Many of the laws of nature we know; but even a full knowledge of all nature were not all knowledge. Nature, as we know it, is but one circle of the limitless whole over which God reigns. We live and move within the iron grasp of laws whose operation is inexorable, and which to us are *necessary*; but we are ignorant of what is beyond the circle we know as nature. The place we live in is so narrow, and the common facts we deal with are so familiar, that we feel far too knowing, and are prone to forget that our knowledge is but a spot of brightness encompassed by a vast ignorance which is dark to us, and unseen. God has kindled a lamp in the world, and within the circle of its rays lie our life and work. Let us be content with the knowledge of our one lighted room in the great house of God. Among the things of nature it contains there is scope for ages of extending search and enlarging sight.

But when we turn round from the work of our hands in the lamplight of nature, and see nothing but darkness, let us know that all around the narrow limits of our gaze God Is, and a law that is above our understanding, and a light that is not for our eyes. Even in ordinary experience, the unknown touches the known, and as we handle the familiar we find the inscrutable within our grasp. Nowhere is this more marked than in our dealing with the facts of life. For life transcends matter and controls it, and the point where these touch is hid from our searching, though it be very long and laboriously close.

The marvel of Satan's transporting Jesus bodily from the Wilderness to the Holy City is outside the bounds of what we know as possible; but that does not remove it from the sphere of fact. Rather, it shows us one glimpse of fact on a level to which our experience is foreign. It exhibits a transaction on a plane to which our sight is unaccustomed. It belongs, so to say, to the realm of an unknown *Fourth Dimension*. Yet this marvel well befits that personal meeting of Satan with the Son of God, which was not all or chiefly of nature, though its scene was within the bounds of nature's territory. It concerns the control of matter and space by spirit and life;



and it sets at nought the notions we have learned by observation.

In our experience, life has only a precarious hold on the materials which are its tabernacle and its tools. In a short-lived mastery it takes and uses these, but on the whole and in the end it is not life that controls matter ; but matter controls life and drags it down from a brief victory to the dire defeat of death. And this we call natural. To us it is natural, and the only thing possible. Yet, in a higher sense, it is this accepted order which is unnatural. To us, life shows itself only in material embodiment ; and it shows itself only enslaved. This bondage of life is the great irony of nature. Nature is not a sphere of life, but a kingdom of death. This kingdom, life invades, and, in every generation, takes by storm in a fleeting success ; and in every generation life suffers repulse and defeat in the inevitable victory of death.

Yet, if there be any truth in religion, if any strength in life, if any life in God, the reign of death is surrounded by the kingdom of life. The place of matter's supremacy is but a gross island in a great sea of life—victorious, endless life. Within this island, life seems a fleeting illusion ; but it is matter that is the illusion. Life is real ;

its material oppressor is a figment of God's word, created by the impulse of His thought and will. Life is the very breath of God Himself, and can not be really enslaved. Physical life, by which gross matter is vitalised, is but a phase of the showing of God. And all the life and reality we know are no more than episodes in a boundless immortality.

Who knows what matter is?<sup>1</sup> Who can tell upon what its strength is based? As we probe the secrets of matter, its reality vanishes. Inward and inward we proceed from truculent matter to ethereal force; and force is the manifestation of energy; and all power is the strength of God.

From the spiritual standpoint, therefore, the mastery of matter is grossly unnatural; and life in this world is a perverted dream, a nightmare in which strength is enslaved by imaginary bonds.

Man, in whom is the life of God, though it be but a spark, has in him the germ of a final supremacy over all material bondage. Meanwhile his soul largely serves that body which is its instrument. Where the material body is,

<sup>1</sup> The most recent answer to this question is, "Matter represents the absence of mass." It is given in the Rede Lecture for 1902: *On an Inversion of Ideas as to the Structure of the Universe*, by Prof. Osborne Reynolds, Owens College, Manchester.

there the soul is found in its normal manifestation and operation. And the body is a piece of nature; awkward, crass, heavy; a cumbersome house for a spiritual tenant, withal that it is so wondrous in its mechanism. Our mind can roam with the marvellous speed of thought; but our body cannot move with any corresponding agility. Our wishes can compass the world with a wider movement than the winds, with a swifter flight than the lightning flash. But our body, the while, sits dully still, or walks with that clumsy gait which mocks the soaring aspirations of our fancy and the strength of our eager will.

This is ordinary; but it is not natural, in that higher sense of nature which takes account of God and of our kinship with Him. It ought to be, that our body can go with our thoughts, and show itself and work its will, irrespective of the illusions of matter and the cumbrous conventions of space and time. We may hold, so far, with the Theosophists,—believing that this power is latent in our human nature, and that its perfection is our future heritage,—that the day will come, when nature, as we know it, shall be turned inside out and upside down, and when life shall be no more subservient, but supreme.

We may see the promise of this in our Lord's

Resurrection life. He then did grasp and use the powers which are reserved for us in our completed redemption. He "went before" His disciples to Galilee by no earthly road. He entered the locked doors of the upper room. He ascended into heaven in a cloud. And in these incidents, and in others like them, He had His own true body; and His living Spirit used it easily and wonderfully, with such a control that it was where He willed to be, and went with His thoughts and appeared. And in this we shall be like Him when we are admitted to the plane of His risen life. Meanwhile "it doth not yet appear." Meanwhile we are caged and oppressed by nature, and we chafe with a dim sense of our servitude and a deep resentment against its bonds. We have obscure hints of these higher possibilities, in which what are everyday impossibilities emerge into a fugitive actuality. But we recognise such phenomena as abnormal, and stigmatise them as morbid. Yet these things have their lessons for us; and they are useful if they teach us a reverent knowledge of our ignorance, which is the largest knowledge we can meanwhile know.

In this Temptation we see an unaccustomed control exerted by life upon matter, in which, at

the bidding of a spiritual impulse, Jesus is bodily transported to the Temple at Jerusalem; and, for once, physical carriage keeps pace with the rapidity of thought. This super-ordinary transportation is distinctly and directly related to the character of the Temptation, to which it forms the prelude. The Devil, having carried Jesus off to the Holy City,—in the words of our version, *setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.*

Here, as in the Snare of Hunger, an apparently simple proposal covers a complex plot. And, as in the former Temptation, the first point we notice is, that Jesus, the Son of Man, is challenged to act in His own behalf as *God's Son*. "Ye shall be as gods," said the Tempter in Eden. Be as God's Son, says the same Tempter in the Wilderness. The Serpent in Eden offered a new sphere of *knowledge*; Satan now invites to a new realm of *experience*, saying: Step safely from this great height. He proposes an excursion in the *Fourth Dimension*.

We may distinguish two aspects in this Temptation: the one affecting solely the relation of Jesus

with His Father ; the other concerning also His dealings with the men whose lot He came to share, and whose souls He sought to save.

Addressing Jesus in the terms, *If Thou be God's Son*, the Tempter taunts Him with His ungodlike humiliation. It is the "Prince of the power of the air"<sup>1</sup> who speaks ; and he has just shown his power in the transporting of himself and the object of his wiles to the Holy City from the far Wilderness. With that fact in mind, we hear a boast in his challenge : *Cast Thyself down*. If I have brought Thee safely hither, shall not God be able to keep Thee in this short, swift flight ? This is a challenge not only to Jesus but also to God His Father, as our Lord at once indicates in His reply. He does not dispute the possibility of doing as the Tempter suggests ; but as in the former Temptation He had detected distrust lurking to betray Him in the guise of confidence, so now He finds presumptuous rashness counselled in the place of quiet trust. The Devil is guilty of a monstrous intrusion between Jesus and His God ; and this our Lord resents and repels in His answer : *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*.

In this Temptation the Devil makes Jesus feel His humiliation as the Son of Man, and tempts

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 2.

Him to rebel against the bondage which His Father has laid upon Him. Has He Godhead? Why then must God's Son *walk*? To the Prince of the power of the air it is but a step from the Wilderness to the Holy City—a swift flight, like the flash of thought. Jesus has shared this even now; may He not show that God's Son has a power like to, if not greater than, the Devil's? Must He with toilsome steps walk here and there like other men? Thus Satan, in the very hour of his own power's display, points the finger of scorn at *Godhead walking*; and it might be hard, even for Jesus, to bear this insult to the Godhead which His voluntary manhood veiled. Yet He accepts it, and owns Himself a man, cribbed by the limits of ordinary human experience, and confined by the bounds of common means of progress and all action. Though He be God's Son, He will walk as a man among men, nor envy nor emulate the proud flight of Satan in his princely power of the air. So He answers humbly, and quotes the Divine law, to which as a man He submits: *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Once, in His ministry, Jesus made an explicit reference to this aspect of His life as a man, in which He stooped *to walk*,—when “there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get

thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill Thee. And He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. *Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.*"<sup>1</sup>

In this, Jesus says that He must *walk* till the appointed end of His mission; and the reference seems to be to the hardships and perils amid which His footsteps went, and which He must not evade, to purchase His own comfort or safety at the cost of the fulfilment of God's will.

Often during His toilsome ministry must this Temptation have recurred to Jesus. Constantly He was worn by toils to which His Godhead was superior. Often He was threatened by and subject to inflictions which He had the power to evade. Yet through and under all these things His Godhead *walked* with a submission and humility which were Divine. And to human footsteps He gave a new great dignity, so that intimates and enemies alike were abashed before His august mien.

We may find in the Gospels several occasions on which Jesus was tempted to use His Divine power and God's care, conveniently but in a way

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 31-33.



inconsistent with the humiliation of His state. When at Nazareth they would have thrown Him over the cliff, "He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." When they took up stones to stone Him in the Temple court, "He hid Himself, and so passed by." In both of these cases it is emphasised that *He went through the midst of His enemies*; and we may take it that this means that His escape was not compassed by supernatural means. We see our Saviour subject to the same Temptation when, in Gethsemane, He cries, "Let this cup pass from Me!" and we see the same victory when He answers His own appeal, saying, "Not My will, but Thine." And next day we hear the Tempter's voice and this same Temptation in the mocking calls of those who stood about Him in His last sufferings, crying, "Come down from the Cross."

These things Jesus might have done as Son of God, but not as the Saviour of men. This Temptation ceased to visit Him only when, of His own will, He gave up the ghost and yielded Himself to death. And, when in His resurrection and His appearances after it we see Him outside the limits and restraints of His humiliation, we see Him use freely the very powers of which the Tempter here solicits the untimely display. The

leap to which Satan invited Jesus was thus a greater than any leap from the Temple ledge ; it was a spiritual step from the path of submission and suffering, which He must walk as a man while with the footsteps of Divinity He pursued the salvation of His fellow-men.

It must always be a question full of mystery to us : Of what nature was the Divine-human consciousness of Jesus ? And, when we think of Him as tempted, we are apt not to have a sense of the reality and severity of the trial to which evil might subject Him. But, in this Temptation which is addressed to Him as God's Son, we may clearly discern that our Lord was subject to great temptation, by very reason of that consciousness which was peculiar to Him. By virtue of His unbroken communion, the life of God flowed without interruption into Him and from Him. By virtue of that Spirit, which was His without measure, He had a unique spiritual control of the material world around Him. By reason of His sinlessness, He could command the power of death. These powers which were possessed by Jesus made a wide endowment, broadening heavenward while poised upon the narrow point of a human life. But Jesus left the great wealth that was His, in the grasp of His Father's hand ;

and He took nothing from its store, save with the sanction of His will and the bidding of His word. Thus, the poise of His super-ordinary powers was not reared upon Himself; for He made Himself dependent, and all He had was held in all its breadth and height by the Hand which upholds the heavens and the earth.

But for Jesus to step from the Temple ledge, would have been to dictate to Heaven instead of waiting its command. Such abandonment of His dependence would have shifted the poise of His Divinity, which was steadied by the fingers of God; and His descent would have cast down the path of salvation from life to death, and the shock of His fall have shaken the throne of God in all the earth.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE SNARE OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION  
—*CONTINUED.*

*The Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be God's Son, cast Thyself down : for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee : and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.—*  
MATT. iv. 5-7.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SNARE OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION

—*CONTINUED.*

**B**ESIDES that aspect of this Temptation, which affects chiefly, if not solely, the relations of our Lord with God His Father, there is another aspect which concerns the dealings of Jesus with men in His ministry. That there is such a side, is indicated by the fact that the Tempter took Jesus to the Holy City and set Him on the Temple ledge. This is not explained in the Gospels; but it must have meaning. We see that at once if we ask: Why was our Lord taken there? If all the Tempter sought was to lead Him to tempt God, and try His own powers by a headlong leap, a precipice might surely have been found in the desert. We have already seen that the exhibition of Satan's power in the transportation to Jerusalem was itself a part of the challenge in which our Saviour was tempted to cast Himself down; and we may judge that the

Holy City was sought for the sake of publicity. Some have found the place where Jesus was set by Satan, in the summit of the central part of the Temple; others, again, on Solomon's porch, or the *στοά βασιλική*. Both of these latter were at top of a precipice, and the giddy downlook from Solomon's porch is described in impressive terms by Josephus.<sup>1</sup> But since we judge that it was with a view to publicity that Satan had brought Jesus to Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem to the Temple, we may be sure that the place where he set Him was one that overlooked the Temple court.

It is no leap into obscurity that is proposed to Christ. The time for His entry on His ministry is near. The Forerunner has caught the ear of the whole land. All men are awake, looking with expectation for the coming of Messiah. And here is suggested to our Lord a startling mode of entry on His public work. Malachi had prophesied: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way for Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, *shall suddenly come to His Temple.*" The first part of this prediction was already fulfilled, and being daily fulfilled: the Tempter proposes a literal fulfilment

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, III. p. 224: τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ.



of the latter part—a grand entry into the Holy City and the Temple ; a sudden, safe descent into the midst of the astonished and admiring crowd that filled the Temple court ; a striking and unmistakable exhibition of Divine power ; an incontrovertible assertion of Divine origin and commission. What more appropriate and effective beginning of His public ministry could be proposed than that Messiah should so alight, as if from heaven direct, and out of a supernal chariot ?

In this view, we see our Lord tempted to indulge in a spectacular effect which He would have none of. His lowly, natural human birth was the entrance God chose for Jesus to the world. His Baptism, along with those who sought to “fulfil righteousness,” was the entry He Himself chose to His ministry. These have given us the Saviour who is near to us, while close to God ; round them have gathered countless reverent associations of faith’s endearment. Compare with them the Tempter’s gaudy project ! He would have annulled their holy simplicity, and would have led Jesus forth as a supernatural acrobat. The scene, as we imagine it, could be portrayed on no page of our Gospels. It is like a woodcut from a mediæval book of magic. In

His reply, *Thou shalt not tempt*, we hear our Lord refuse to prostitute His Godhead to a use which is merely theatrical. Repeatedly, during His after ministry, He was urged to show just some such "sign" as was now demanded by Satan; but He never lent Himself to thau-maturgic display. All His miracles served a purpose of mercy to the subjects of them, or were instructive as large object-lessons; and He never stooped to the performance of a merely impressive work of wonder, devoid of moral significance and spiritual aim.

In this Temptation we must distinguish what was peculiar in it, and of particular application to our Lord, from what is of wider significance and capable of application to ourselves. The supernatural transportation from the desert to the Holy City; the giddy poising on the Temple ledge; the descent proposed from thence,—these were, in a sense, accidental features of the Temptation. They command our reverent interest; and, so far as may be, we must give them careful attention in order that we understand them. Yet they are far apart from circumstances such as ours. But our Lord's clear, short answer to the Tempter shows that the moral and spiritual issues underlying the Snare were simple. And the fact that He couched

His answer in the terms of a command addressed by God to all who own Him Lord, means that this Temptation was in its essence such as other men might suffer ; such also as they might meet, as well as He, with weapons from the common armoury of faith.

The Snare of the Fourth Dimension has reference to a thing which Jesus in His earthly life shared with us, namely, our imprisonment within the bounds of material things, in which the temporal is seen, and the eternal hid from sight.

In our ordinary life and work we accept the limitations of physical existence without question and almost without thought. But when the word of God is in our ears ; and when faith in Him lifts up the eyes of its inward and imperfect sight ; when also the impulse of His spiritual law lays a pressure to obedience on our backward will,—then the material limitations of our ordinary life press hard upon us. They seem to contradict the spiritual with bold insolence. They drag down our aspirations. They gall our hearts with the fetters of worldly weakness and want. Whether in the Temple court of Jerusalem long ago, or in the streets of our own town to-day, the earth is the floor of a prison to man. It is hard and dark. We cannot see through it, nor can we pass

through it to find a gateway into largeness and beauty beyond. If a man will cast himself down upon the earth, he shall but prove himself a stupid clod ; and where he falls there he shall lie, a part of the dead earth around him ; and the height from which he may adventure shall measure the height of his folly, and not the elevation of his faith. Thus the floor of our prison is solid beneath us, and strong with a strength which is deadly to resist.

But have we not freedom upwards in the open heavens? And on every hand a wide room without walls? Nay! we are tied down with invisible bonds ; and if we go far to east or west, we do but make a weary circuit back to the narrow place from whence we started forth. Thus are we in prison ; and if our sight can go beyond our prison-house, it sees no thing that points us surely to the throne of God whence His law comes, or to the light of His presence which is eternal truth. Yet His word of love is in our ears, and His law of righteousness upon our heart. And these are within us ; and it is they that make us beat against the hard pavement of our life, and run abroad restlessly to find a wall to the world with a door out to heaven. And when we strain our eyes to see God afar in the

heavens, we see nothing but that *temporal* which alone can be seen.

It is in such ways that this Temptation of our Lord may come upon us. If Religion be true, so many things ought to justify our faith. If we be sons of God, the spiritual must transcend the gross material. No distance can be vast enough to stay our flight to the very feet of God. No darkness can hinder the sight of our eyes when they seek to His heart. If the spring of His eternal life be within us, we hold within ourselves the key that can unlock all physical impossibilities with the skill and power of Him who made these barriers and set them up between the world and heaven.

Such feelings and thoughts are not those of submission and faith. When we are tempted to try God, the suggestion may come in the language of faith; but unbelief may wear the guise of a great confidence, and rise within us in an unholy impulse to arrogate to our imperfect selves the high prerogative of perfect knowledge and unhindered power.

The control of spirit over matter is a secret that is still kept from us by God; and the power of the soul over its material body is still largely hid. God has given us other things to learn at

present. We chafe for the *control of the spiritual over material things*: but there is something between us and that; for now is the time God has appointed for us to gain *control of the spiritual over moral things and powers*. It is for this that He has placed us in a certain school which we rebelliously would call a prison. He has chosen our surroundings and ordained their limits with both wisdom and love. There is a great trial of faith in the denseness and the distance which shut us off from the powers that underlie nature and transcend it. We must neither deny nor grudge this, for it is of God. When we feel as if this or that ought to be, in consistency with the demands of faith, let us know that what ought to be shall be. But as Jesus put first the fulfilment of all righteousness, so, in our case, the moral necessity comes first. By Scripture, as well as by reason, we are promised a future great enlargement of faculty and activity; but first we must be morally fit to grasp and hold and use it.

Though even now we are the sons of God, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but we shall be like Him, who was tempted like as we are, if in Him we avoid the Tempter's snare and overcome his power. "It doth not yet appear;" meanwhile, (that long meanwhile of the

patience of God in which He waits for our improvement,) we cherish a faith in great, future things not yet revealed; and we must already be like Him in a humble acceptance of the conditions of God for our temporal life.

As this Temptation has an aspect that concerned Jesus towards God alone, and another that concerned His mission to men; as He was tempted not only to presumptuous precipitancy but also to display, so the lessons which His trial has for us are susceptible also of this double view.

The trial of the Temple ledge was unique; and the nearest analogue to it may not be general among men, for perhaps not everyone is conscious of the material bonds which restrain the human spirit in a subjection that may gall to resentment, and a rebellious tempting of God. Yet there is a lesson here for all; for our Lord, in His victorious reply, exposes all the temptations of Satan towards rashness and presumption and prideful display. And these are common.

Often does Satan appear as an angel of light to lead us out of the path of duty and safety, under the pretext of trust in God. This wile may invite us to recklessness of any sort, and to the abuse of Divine care by trying to make it

serve foolhardiness. We may rush into danger, praying for preservation, when our first need is pardon. Such snares beset religious life. Experience abounds in spiritual precipices, and we have need to walk warily. We say that we are sons of God in Christ, and the Tempter says: Yea, and as sons ye may have much liberty; go where you will, do what you will, God will keep you from harm. Deluded by such sophisms, we have seen the amiable zeal of a recent faith spoiled by the vapours of sin, which it went into and meant to dissipate. Instead of seeking circumstances of difficulty that grace and power may abound, we must avoid danger whenever we seek our Father's care; and His answer may come in successful avoidance rather than in extrication or repair.

In His attitude of waiting dependence, Jesus is the perfect type of the relation we are meant to bear to God. The secret of any life and power we now have, or shall hereafter have, is that dependence in which we take what God gives, and do what He wills.

The promise quoted by the Tempter<sup>1</sup> is one given to walkers for their walking. It speaks of *ways* and *treading* and *trampling*; and to use

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xci. 11-13.



its terms in reference to a flying leap is to pervert it. And our progress to the presence of God and to His ends is a walk. In it we move as ordinary men along a common road. We are not borne on wings past toil, nor lifted up by magic out of straits and danger. When, therefore, you are in doubt or difficulty, or harassed in any wise, wait : stand firm and still. If you are where God put you, He will meet you where you are. And if He send you or beckon you across even very rough, hard discouragements, or through pressing perils, walk : go forward to the place He has appointed, and He will guard your way. Thus tempt Him not ; but trust Him and obey.



CHAPTER IX.  
THE ASSAULT OF THE KING OF THE  
WORLD.

*Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.—MATT. iv. 8, 9.*

*The Devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.—LUKE iv. 5-7.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ASSAULT OF THE KING OF THE WORLD.

IN studying the Temptations in the Wilderness, it may strike us how apparently trivial the first two are. In them the issues of good and evil are hung upon such small things as a meal of bread and a venturesome step. But we may discern a progress in these typical Temptations. First, in His weakness and hunger, Jesus is tempted to a faithless distrust of His Father's care. The next snare is laid to catch, not faithlessness, but faith. Jesus has refused to exert His power to make stones into bread, and has elected to depend quietly on God, even in extreme distress. So Satan says: Thou wilt not use Thy power? then take hold of God, and with a great trust compel Him to exert His strength to save Thee in this deadly leap. These earlier Temptations, therefore, are snares of guile rather than assaults of strength. And in this they are

like most of the temptations to which we are exposed ; for constantly do great moral and spiritual issues hang upon trifles, and right and wrong are guilefully obscured in the manner of their presentation to our choice.

Very different from these is the third Temptation, in which *the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give unto Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.* }

Notice the progress in the Devil's manifestation of himself. First he came as one who shared with Jesus the Wilderness environment of stones and hungry barrenness. Then as one who could transport himself and Jesus with a flight as of thought from the desert to Jerusalem. Now again his personality enlarges, and his power extends before our view. And his rôle as Tempter is altered correspondingly. He was first a wanderer in the desert ; then his haunts were shown to be as wide as the land of Israel, which should be the scene of Jesus' ministry ; and now he who had lately hovered on the topmost places of the Temple extends his flight to the high places of the earth, and, pointing to the kingdoms of all the world and the glory of them,

he says to Jesus, *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

In the earlier Temptations, Satan had dared Jesus to a display of Divine power, His own and His Father's; and had prefaced his proposals with an *If Thou be God's Son*: now from these Snares he betakes himself to direct Assault. This change of attitude is strategical. The abrupt boldness of impious attack is meant to bear down opposition by sheer force. The Tempted One is to be appalled into submission at the same time that He is dazzled by a stupendous display of the Tempter's imperial power. To us it seems a cruel test; for Jesus is bowed with bodily weakness and the fatigue of prolonged resistance and the burden of His impending ministry. And his heart is beset by the human longing for repose, even if it be in the rest of defeat. To the eye of the Tempter, skilled in temptation, the manhood of Jesus seems about to preponderate and overbalance His Divinity. Jesus has hitherto insisted on answering as a man the appeals which have been addressed to Him as God's Son; and this time the Tempter answers the implied rebuke with which Jesus has unmasked his wiles. As a man Jesus is now addressed; and with a magnificent insolence of blasphemy Satan boasts to the Son of

Man his power over this his kingdom, the world. Pointing to all of greatness and glory the wide world displays, he says: *All this is mine: it is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.*<sup>1</sup> *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.* A moment's obeisance, and the world's rule in return; and upon that crucial moment is hung the kingship of Satan and the Kingdom of God in the world. The enormity of the profaneness staggers us to contemplate. Surely this is a second climax of Satan's proud defiance of God; an exaggerated repetition of the sin that cast him out of heaven? But this is the way in which the Tempter turns from his appeals to Jesus as the Son of God; this is how he measures out defiant insolence to the tempted Son of Man. Our Lord's dignity of deliberate response is roused to a passion of indignation as, in tones of powerful command, He replies: *Get thee hence!* But still He answers as a man, and quotes revealed authority: *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and Him only shalt thou serve.*

We read that Satan took Jesus *up into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.*

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 6.



We know that there is not in all geography any mountain commanding such a prospect. This is how the Temptation was understood by the disciples to whom our Lord told it; and it may be that this was how it appeared to Jesus Himself. What we are here told of is a miraculous flash of sight, in which Jesus and His Tempter surveyed the breadth of the world and its pomp in one dazzling moment of supernatural vision. S. Luke indicates that the prospect was not displayed to the physical eye, when he says that the things Satan showed were seen *in a moment of time*.<sup>1</sup> The human eye can see but little in a moment; and in presence of a scene, if we do not take leisure and look from point to point with careful observation, we are blind although our eyes are open; and though beauty or power be unveiled before us, we can not see their glory for lack of time to look. It is the sight of the mind, therefore, of which the Gospels tell; and perhaps of the mind, not merely independent of the eye, but untrammelled by the limits of a material organ of mentation. Thus, in this Temptation we have another glimpse of the transcendency of spirit over matter and space and time. And as, lately,

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 5.

Jesus was exalted during forty days and nights of conflict so that He was unconscious of the passing of the moments into hours and days till six long weeks had passed; so, now, a moment of time is stretched so as to contain a vision of the world's extent and an apprehension of the greatness of its pomp.

∴ It is impossible to see this Temptation rightly, if we view it with a narrow look. It was necessary, for its presentation to Jesus, that He should be shown the kingdom of the Devil in the world. And we must have the same outlook; and, understanding, we must see the fact of Satan's sovereignty and the nature and extent of his rule. This Temptation is no mere snare in which wily deception is sought to be exercised upon our Lord. The offer of Satan is evidently real. The key to the transaction is in the fact that, in a profound and most important sense, this world belongs to Satan. This claim on his part is implied in S. Matthew's version; and it is explicitly stated in that of S. Luke: *All this power will I give Thee, and the glory: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.* This is the Devil's assertion, and it is not contradicted by our Lord. We may even observe that there is credited to Satan the intention to

be accurate ; for he implies the supremacy of God while asserting his own mastery in the world : *that is delivered unto me.*

Here, in very remarkable surroundings, we have a great mystery told, though not explained. This world in its glory and power is claimed by Satan, and his claim is not disputed, but virtually recognised. This is an important glimpse of the moral and spiritual background which lies behind the life of this world and all its affairs. And not only for our understanding of this Temptation, but also for our understanding of all religion, it is of immense importance that we realise in some measure what this means.

All through Scripture we may find hints at the sovereignty of Satan in the world. The heart of the Eden story is its pictorial representation of his malignant triumph in the corruption of humanity ; and this does but picture and enforce the fact that evil has a foothold in the earth, and, spite of God or by His leave, stands unashamed and lords it in the affairs of men. How this came to be, is never discussed in Scripture ; but it is of great interest and meaning to have the statement that behind the sin of the world is the fact that men are the natural prey of evil, because their home is in the world, and the world is the

kingdom of an evil king, to whom is delivered its glory and power to give them to whomsoever he will. No doubt, there will always be some interpreters of Christian truth who prefer to take both the king and his kingship as symbolical. But that does not affect the essential truth of the scriptural regard of men and their affairs in relation to the world and nature, though it may lessen the intensity of the personal apprehension of the Bible view.

If we read the Old Testament in the light of this view, it is the history of God's attempt to found a Theocracy within the realm of Satan's rule. But at the time when Satan met Jesus in the Wilderness that long endeavour had attained only a small success, and the Devil's boast of mastery was not unwarranted. He was still king in the world; and that not merely in name. He was not endowed with only a shadowy rule, whose interest was historical rather than present and practical. The power of the kingdoms was in his grasp; and their glory was his, wherewith to dazzle the eyes of men and even of the Son of God. It is in the light of this actual sovereignty and personal supremacy of Satan that we must view this Temptation of Jesus by him.

The long endeavour of God to gain a king-

dom in the world had, so far, been frustrated on a large scale by the power of Satan within his realm. But God had not abandoned that endeavour; and now a climax in His effort had arrived; and here is His Son in the nature of humanity, standing among men in the place of their servitude to sin. By virtue of His manhood, Jesus is within the area of Satan's sovereignty; and He has come, not to deny his authority or dispute his reign, but to subvert these. His purpose is confessed: to save men from the Devil's power, to destroy his works, and, in the end, to destroy Satan himself and his kingdom together.

This Temptation shows the unveiled meeting of the Prince of this world with the Son of the Eternal King. To Satan, the coming of Jesus was a foreign invasion, and His ministry an incitement to rebellion. And that view is perhaps the deepest we can have of Christ's work on the earth. It is apparently His own view, underlying all His deeds and expressed in many of His words. Jesus constantly insisted on the Kingdom of God as a new and foreign thing which He came to bring. And we may find implied in this a reference to the Kingdom of Satan which was native to the

world. So, also, the mere phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" may be seen to imply a contrast with the kingdom of the world. We remember, too, our Lord's emphatic assertion: "My kingdom is not of this world."<sup>1</sup> He said this pointedly to Pilate. Here was the Wilderness Temptation recurring; and here it was again rejected. He might have had the world's sovereignty, but He expressly disowned and refused it. We must relate with this our Lord's urgency regarding the relinquishment of the things of earth by those who would choose heaven's treasure. And if we ask, Why might not the kingdom brought by Jesus have been at once a kingdom of the world and of heaven? the answer seems to be, that this world had already a king, and his were the glory and power of its reign; and men could become subjects of God only by rebelling against Satan's rule. It has been held by some that here and now this world is hell; and there is much to be said for their contention.

It is a mystery to us, how rebellious Satan should have such freedom and power; but Scripture shows, though obscurely, that there are definite limits to these, and that there is reserved

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 36.

for Satan and those under him a long delayed judgment, which shall be followed by their final doom, in which the enemies of God, with their works, shall be destroyed. The mission of Jesus was one of rescue. The world, Satan's kingdom, was involved in his doom; and the men to whom God had given life from Himself were entangled in the fatal toils of death. Therefore Christ came; the strength and life of God were centred in Him. He came, and He remained, free from the evil that severed men from God and made them subject to Satan. His mission was to undo the malignant work of Satan and reveal the deadliness of sin; and this He did by revealing the love of God and imparting the secret of His life. And He told the height and wideness of His supremacy, and its future vindication in a judgment which must perish all that is at enmity with Him.

The errand of Jesus was to incite men to a revolt from Satan which should make them freedmen of heaven; to induce an allegiance to God in which they should be His sons. Within the very bounds of Satan's principality He would create a kingdom of heaven peopled by a spiritual race of God's sons; and it was for this that He set Himself to found a Church

detached from those temporalities which were the glory of Satan and the instruments of his malign power. These were the husks of this world, which were grasped by the strong hand of Satan. The kernel was men's hearts; and Jesus sought the living core, careless of the husk, and in many urgent words He tried to teach men His own eager assiduity regarding life, and His own utter carelessness of the things that in this world encumber it. His aim was to rob the hand of Satan of its living prey; and He was content to leave in his clutch the glory and power of the world, and that he who was dead to God should carry these dead things to his own eternal death. For, the last that we see in Scripture of Satan's kingdom is a glimpse of this world perishing in flames; and that lurid evening is followed by the morning of the new day of a new heaven and earth, in which there is no King save God, and no law save love, and no death, but only life.

We live so much on the surface of things that we are apt not to realise that there is an unseen basis of our moral life, and a hidden background of the spiritual conflict of our toilsome days. There is a depth in our experience that we are apt to disregard. In our moral conflict there is an intensity that is utterly disproportioned to the



trifles it immediately concerns. The things that test our character are in themselves ridiculously unimportant; yet round them there turns an immortal destiny. This fateful undercurrent of our smooth and superficial life is vividly shown in this Temptation; there is a battle being fought around us and by us, and we need to know it and be strong and fully armed. What is hid from easy, careless eyes was plainly seen by Paul, and is pointed out by him in these remarkable terms: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."<sup>1</sup>

Our home, meanwhile, is in the camp of Satan; but Jesus carried His war of righteousness into the camp of our enemy, who held us captive, and thus we live in the midst of that strife in which the stake on Satan's part is the kingship of the world, and on our part is the life of our souls.

When the Devil met Jesus in the time of His Temptation, the Wilderness was, as it were, the frontier of his realm. There he met the Divine Invader; and in this third Temptation we see him deal with Jesus regarding the gigantic enterprise

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 12 (R.V.).

He now essayed. *In a moment of time*, the rebel king arrays himself in all the glory and power of the kingdoms of the earth. With their splendour upon him, he speaks to Jesus according to His own election, as a man. But in the Divine Man he recognises a kingly One, fit to be King of all the world; and that Kingship he offers Him. *All will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.* In such a greeting, Satan acknowledges that the coming of Jesus means ultimate defeat for himself. There belongs to Jesus a power which he cannot withstand; and its strength is in this: that He has not done homage to sin. All men who have bowed to wrong are the subjects of Satan. This Man is not such. He is free though in the world of sin; and He is stronger than its king. Therefore Satan seeks to buy Him over to alliance with himself; and the whole world with its glory and power is his bribe.

If Jesus would bend His heart towards Satan and away from God, then He too should have sinned; and the forces of heaven which were in Him should be powerless against hell; and the powers of life, which were His for death's destruction, should be themselves cut off from life; and the avenue of God, whose door He opened

between heaven and earth, should be locked behind Him so that He could not go back, and, in a victory over death, set wide that "open door which none can shut."<sup>1</sup> This was Satan's impotent desire; and in his bold bid of all he had in all the world we see the price that he set upon the man Christ Jesus.

If we miss here the subtlety which marks the two earlier Temptations, let us not fail to realise the vehement force with which Jesus is now assailed. We may be sure that the sense of this was very real to Him, and that its pressure was hard to withstand. For the ministry of Jesus was hard to His manhood. The way of life for men must be for Him a way of death; and we know, in our measure, how the trial pressed upon Him, so that at one time and another He was "sore amazed," and "troubled" in spirit, and "straitened"; and how He cried out to God, that He might intervene to recall the sentence of His sacrifice. These sore things were the penalty of His perseverance in His enterprise of life, within the sphere of death. And He saw them as vividly in the Wilderness as He did in Gethsemane; and there also He accepted them as really as in the late night of His betrayal. Can

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 8.

we doubt that this choice was hard in the presence of this world's Prince? For, when He indignantly refused homage to any but God, and professed His allegiance to Heaven, Jesus gave Himself over to the fierce hate of Hell in the day of its power, and to the cruelty of men who would not be saved from sin.

CHAPTER X.  
UNHALLOWED MEANS AND  
UNHOLY ENDS.

*The Devil . . . sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.—MATT. iv. 8, 9.*

## CHAPTER X.

### UNHALLOWED MEANS AND UNHOLY ENDS.

**I**N Satan's claim of the kingdoms of the world and their power<sup>1</sup> and glory for his own, the emphasis is on the power and glory. And if we would understand the kingship of Satan, we must think of what the power and glory of the world are, and how it is that Satan can grasp and hold these, so that he is a king within the dominions of Almighty God while a rebel against His law.

Power and glory are not simple things; also they are not absolute, but relative. They take all their meaning from the mind and heart that are capable of swelling with the sense of greatness controlled, and rising in the pride of glory possessed.

There are natures to which power is non-existent save in the form of brute force. The

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 6, where *power* is added to the *glory* of S. Matthew's report.

beasts of the field can have no conception of power, beyond that of strength for fight; and it is the mark of beasts that have come under human control, that they are subdued by a vague sense of an ascendancy in man which is stronger and more subtle than mere strength. They have a dim knowledge of his power, which, in its rise, may be little more than a recognition of his complex ability to inflict pain and devise restraints. The beasts are embarrassed by man when they yield to him; we cannot credit them with any real sense of what his power is. As for a sense of glory on their part, the nearest thing to it that we can see is that physical exhilaration which is produced in some by wide space and free air and bright light. In a high-bred horse, for example, we may see that animal nature reflects the world's glory in the tingling response of his quivering strength. The brutes share the pulse of the world's strength to the full; they are a part of its glory, and more or less consciously enjoy the flow of its life. Also, they are capable of terror in the presence of exceptional manifestations of nature's forces.

But power and glory, in the human sense, are very different from this. These are the products of conscious reflection and of moral considerations.



Power becomes a new thing when we rise from physical force to intellectual control, and to that complicated ascendancy which has its source and sphere in moral factors and conditions. It is one great difference that marks off civilisation from savagery, that, as we rise in the scale of development, mere physical force counts for less and less; and the mental and moral bulk more and more in the sense of what is great and glorious.

Yet the material things of the world are not dropped out of account by man in his advancement. They are taken up and transformed in character; they are grasped to be used for ends beyond themselves. The problems of humanity gather round the fact that man lives a moral life in and through material things. As his spirit is clothed and conditioned by the body, so his whole life is clothed by the things of the world. These make him what he is; but he in turn makes the world. Its gold is a new creation when he mints it into money; for he stamps it with a new significance, which is moral and legal, national and social. So, also, the jewels of the earth become insignia of monetary and æsthetic rank; and the common comforts and necessities, which are first the accessories of physical life, become

still more the accessories of a life whose base is not physical but mental and moral, in the sense that all social things are such.

The power and glory of the world, as these are known to man, are moral, but made out of the material. All riches and grandeur are glorified dust; and honour and power are subtle webs spun out of man's heart and weaved round his soul; and they interlace each man's life with his fellow's.

From this we may see the precise point at which Satan can grasp the power and glory of the world, and be a Prince in it over men, even while it belongs to God the Creator. The kingship of Satan is a *moral* power; his power is over men who have sinned; and when he touches the moral affairs of men and sways the issues of right and wrong, he touches the point where power and glory emerge from brute force and common matter. Gold is God's in the mine; it may become Satan's when it is put into currency; because, as money, it is more the creation of man than of God. The gems of the earth are God's in the mine; they are His also in the hand of the innocent child, who delights in their radiance and colour. But they may become Satan's peculiar possession and instrument when they have gained

the significance of wealth and social display and rivalry. The beauty and sparkle which please the little child cannot debase him ; but the same lustre may kindle in the full-grown eye the light of envious desire, and fill the lustful heart with dull discontent or base dishonesty. So also with shelter and food and clothing : these are good in God's hand, though they are material things of this world ; and they are good in our hand when we take them simply, and with thanks to Him who gives us them. But Satan may be the architect of fortune to the ambitious man, who seeks, not sufficiency for want and good works, but that abundance which makes power and glory. His mark may be on every stone of the mansion that is reared as a temple of Mammon ; and the clothes that should serve decency and health may become the livery of Satan ; and though the table is spread with the best gifts of God and uncovered with pious decorum, the sumptuous meal may be, morally, an orgie of the Devil's worship.

It is thus that Satan can claim and grasp the power of the world and its glory. His hold on men is moral ; and only through sin can he touch men and their affairs. But power and glory are each a compound made up of material things *plus*

moral interests; and in all the affairs of men which concern these Satan has a hold on the moral part of those compounds, the world's power and glory; and a handle by which he can turn them to his own use in establishing a moral sway, which is founded on the material instruments of moral interests.

In view of this we may discern the nature of the kingship that was offered to Jesus in the third Temptation.

The Assault of the King of the world was made in a Temptation of Unhallowed Means. Jesus came seeking a spiritual and moral kingship which should subvert the rule of Satan in the world. The means to that could only be moral and spiritual; but Satan sought to turn Him aside to seek an influence like his own in source and character. Jesus found Satan using a long accustomed control of men's hearts by means of the medley of moral and material interests which go to make up worldly power and glory. He found men holding to this world's things with strained hearts and tense grasp; their moral nature bent down to the material objects of their misguided, eager desire, and their interest so engrossed that heaven had no attraction for them, and things spiritual

no reality. This, He came to reverse. He came, that men might leave dead things and cling to life, and, instead of grovelling earthwards, might aspire to heaven. His coming was a true epoch in the evolution of humanity; for when He came the moral was in the world, with only the material below it to hold on to or to stand upon. Jesus brought to light the purely spiritual, and set it within reach of men's hearts. Then, the moral was clearly set between these two, the material and the spiritual—that which was lower than itself and that which was higher. Thus the choice between the world and heaven was displayed. The project of Jesus was to disentangle the entwinement of moral with material. Out of that compound, earth's glory, He would take the moral element that men's hearts supplied, and wrest it from its debasing partnership, and attach it to the gifts of God's love and His Spirit and life. Thus He would make a new union of moral with spiritual, in which men should be drawn up with Him from earth to heaven, from death to life, from Satan to God.

It is on the threshold of this errand that Satan assails Jesus to turn Him aside from His purpose. It is therefore that he leads Him into

the sphere of earth's power and glory, and invites Him to take all that it contains, and with that to be content. The choice put before Jesus is the choice between a spiritual kingdom and a kingdom of this world; and He turns resolutely from the lower to the higher.

In his offer of the world, Satan tempted our Lord with the bait of personal aggrandisement, to lead Him aside from the salvation of men. Power and glory were to be His; but His possession of them, so gained, could have no promise for the men whom Jesus came to save. We see the essential futility of this Assault when we realise that it was an appeal to a selfishness which was not in Jesus. His mission was not merely incidentally self-sacrificing, but unselfish as the very heart of God; and how beggarly does the imperial Devil look, when we see him with his bribe, beside the humble Jesus! Jesus, who has no thought for Himself, and no wish for His own things; who for our sakes would not be rich, but was willingly poor that so His help might come to us!

Yet it had been easy for Christ to take the world's kingship by means of the power and glory men already loved; and it was a hard, long task that He faced: to turn the affections

and lives of men from the earthly and dead to heaven and God's truth and life. He came, a King and to be a King of men ; but, because He disowned the power and glory compounded by Satan with sin, His Kingship was first denied, and then sent out into an unbelieving world to be the subject of age-long debate, before it finally shall win the world to recognition of its Lord.

When in response to Satan's offer Jesus said, *Thou shalt worship the Lord, and Him only*, He refused the attainment of sovereignty in the world by any other than the spiritual way of God. It might well be hard for His manhood to reject the easy way to the world's throne. But Jesus was true to His God and true to His love for men ; and temporal power and glory were nothing to Him whose heart had not suffered the binding of their spell. In His victorious reply He proved Himself a King, and we hear Him assert that freedom from Satan and sense and sin which was His, and which belonged to no other man. Though it was man's birthright, it was a new gift from Heaven with which Jesus was fully endowed. It was this that made Him the Saviour of mankind ; for He brought this freedom in Himself, to share

it with all who would receive the truth that it should make them free.

There is a dramatic aspect of the Temptations of Jesus, in which, without detracting from the reality and intensity with which they affected Him in the Wilderness, we may see in each of them, rehearsed beforehand in epitome, things which were afterwards to be acted out in the larger scene of the national ministry of Jesus, and which were again to be reproduced in the experience of His followers and the history of His Church.

Few things are clearer in the ministry of Jesus than the constant besetting of His steps by the Temptation of Unhallowed Means. In the Wilderness, Satan offered Him power and glory in the large and, as it were, in the abstract. He was tempted to pursue the unhallowed method of homage to Satan, and to seek by that means the unholy end of an unspiritual reign. So represented, this choice was between faithfulness to God and frank blasphemy against Him; and there is no indication as to the way in which Satan might give the world's throne to Jesus.

In His ministry, our Lord might not again be



subject to such an unveiled Assault as this in the Wilderness is. But the same Temptation was pressed closely home to Him in His dealings with the people of Israel and their rulers. He was met by a mass of Messianic expectation, which would have welcomed His pretension to an earthly throne. Was He not David's Son? Did He not tread the courts of His fathers' capital and walk throughout the borders of the fair principality that had been theirs? These things Israel remembered, and did not let Him forget. Cherishing the traditions of an ancient glory, long since dead, they fed upon these their present pride and their hate of Rome's oppression and their hope of deliverance. The cliffs of Jerusalem and her ancient stones; the hills and valleys of the land,—all had fingers that pointed to the past, and each a tongue that longed to speak allegiance to a native king. If Messiah would but come and speak the word, He should be answered with a loyal echo from every heart in Israel. The throne of David was empty; and if He would claim it, every stone and hill and vale should be a fortress to defend His right. Then the glorious past might live again. Then Jesus, rapturously embraced by an enthusiastic nation, might overthrow the iron rule of Rome

and centre a world-wide empire round the little Hebrew state. There was a kingship in Jesus that could have accomplished this ; and the power and glory of such a dream were Satan's to give. The whole pressure of popular opinion and impulse was ready to further Him if He would espouse its ends. The whole strength of world-influence were with Him if, instead of a humble walk to heavenly ends, He would choose a royal progress to an earthly throne.

But the throne of Jesus was in heaven ; and the enthronement that He sought on earth should be in that bit of heaven which He would have in every human heart.

If the Temptations of Jesus were thus the trials of His ministry rehearsed beforehand in an intense epitome, they were also the temptations that have beset His Church in the ages of her unworthy following in the footsteps of her Lord. Too often the Church has fallen before Satan's Temptation of Unhallowed Means. At one time and another, in a greater and a less degree, she has been unfaithful to God and given homage to Satan, and sought the world's sovereignty instead of heaven's kingdom and reward. We see this on a great scale and with terrible effects in the apostasy of Rome from

purity of faith and worship. The king of this world bought her over to alliance with worldly empire, and gave her a dominion which was great and wide, but unspiritual in its source and character; and the debasement of Roman doctrine and ritual and practice prove how disastrous it was that the Church failed to stand where her Lord had stood firm and prevailed.

Even where Roman errors have been recanted and eschewed, Christian communities have yielded to the glamour of the glory of the world. They have pandered to riches, and bought wealth by the sacrifice of truth. They have grasped influence by policy instead of principle, and allowed temporal powers to usurp spiritual prerogative. In these ways has the Church of Christ been tempted and drawn from her heavenward course. And wherever she has gained emolument and aggrandisement from the world, not by faith but by force or by secular law, she has touched the sceptre of Satan, and fallen from her trust in God.

But, even though she stumble, the Church of Christ is led by God; and, though she fall, His grace will lift her up. For Jesus met the powers of Satan and death and hell on her behalf; and in the end His victory shall avail, and she shall

share His completed conquest and His perfect reign.

While faith and righteousness are always simple, it is peculiarly characteristic of temptation that it is often complex. It begets misconceptions and creates misunderstandings. It prevails amid a confusion which is its own atmosphere. It may be that the Temptation of Unhallowed Means with which Jesus was assailed was not merely a simple bid for His disloyalty to God. In another aspect we may see in it an attempt to deceive our Lord into the thought that He might save the world by grasping the lordship Satan offered Him; that by a seeming alliance with Satan He might effect a world-revolt from him. So viewed, it is a Temptation to seek, not an unholy but a good end by Unhallowed Means. Then this Temptation is a gigantic snare, and its flagrant audacity is the exposure of all such snares. In these there is always present, whether hidden or displayed, the homage to Satan, which is here an expressed term of the proposal. Jesus was not misled; and let us learn and remember, that goodness cannot use evil means without becoming evil. Thus the use of evil means gives away the power

of doing good ; and, though Satan may bargain to give or accomplish this or that thing which is near our heart, we must not deal with him ; for all dealings are evil, that are not dealings with good. And Satan does not hold to his bargain ; for, when once evil means are adopted, his end is gained, and we are vassals subject to his lordship, and without appeal. Thus Unhallowed Means lead certainly towards Unholy Ends.



CHAPTER XI.

FROM TEMPTATION TO SERVICE.

*All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.—MATT. iv. 9, 10.*



## CHAPTER XI.

### FROM TEMPTATION TO SERVICE.

THE Tempter showed Jesus the world, and dazzled the eyes of His manhood with its power and glory. We must remember that our Lord was a man, and a young man, when He looked on what Satan displayed. The appeal of such a vision to such a mind as His must have been immense; but its chief force was not a pressure in that direction to which the Tempter sought to turn Him. Still, let us see Jesus as He looks, for the first time, on the wide scene of the world's activity and feels the glow of its fevered heart. He is newly separated from the retirement of His prolonged youth. A new consciousness of relation to the world and of mission to it has filled His mind. A peerless love for men is in His heart; and along with it an impulse to join Himself to them and to grasp their affairs with His hand. In His motion and strong resolve towards action, the steps of Jesus

have been turned aside into the Wilderness. There He has lingered in meditation, stern conflict, long debate: the exaltation of these exercises is now passed, the last wiles of Satan have been plied upon His weariness. The end of His sojourn in the Wilderness is at hand; already His thoughts are turned towards the world which He is fain to save. This is the moment in which Satan unfolds the vision of the power and glory of all the kingdoms, and presents himself as King of the kings of the earth.

While we see those elements in this Temptation which are unmatched in the experience of other men, we must not fail to observe those aspects in which it comes nearest to ourselves. Jesus in the Wilderness stands where all young manhood stands—between private youth and mature responsibility; and He looks upon the world with high expectation and strong purpose. As He looks, His regard contains all the elements that are purely natural and right in the outlook of a young man who is reaching out towards his life-work in the world. We are in the world, and we belong to it, and it claims us. Yet in another sense we feel that the world belongs to us. There is an instinct of sovereignty in us that claims

the world for our own. There is a world-hunger which is the passion of not ignoble spirits; it is prone to have wonderful visions of power and glory seen in a moment of time. The ambition to be someone in the world, and to do something in it which shall leave an abiding mark,—these are not unworthy aims; and their dream is hid in many an unlikely breast. And, withal, there is found in every wholesome heart the impulse to claim its native fellowship with other men. Wherever the heart of manhood goes out to the world in desire; wherever its hand is reached forth to the world's things to grasp them, there Satan is found. He stands beside us as he stood beside Jesus; his hand filled with large offers, his lips whispering disloyalty to God.

The hour in which we newly realise our relation to the world is a dangerous one, because of the pull it makes upon our heart to draw it away from God and His service and His love. We conceive that, when Jesus was tempted in the desert, His sense of relation to the world had been recently enlarged and perfected in His Baptism; and, viewing Him as a man tempted by Satan in this new sense and situation that were His, we may see that one thing made Him safe in what is to other men a dangerous crisis.

He brought to His Baptism, and had confirmed in it, a perfect sense of His perfect relation to God His Father. That made Him safe against the Assault of the King of the world.

There is a great meaning for us in the fact of those first words that we hear Jesus say in early youth : " My Father." The lesson is pointed by the confirmation of His Sonship at Jordan as He stepped from out of youth into manhood, and went up into the Wilderness to bind the burden of His work upon His willing heart. In our humble distance from His perfectness we must emulate the learning of Jesus which He carried into the Wilderness and through its ordeal. Only one thing can make it safe for us to meet the world's king and see the vision he displays, and feel the kinship of our hearts with the power and glory of the earth. That one thing is to know and love God as our Father. This is the lesson of childhood and youth ; and if we learn it, its meaning has a strength that is stronger upon us than the power of the world, and stronger than the pull which its glory can exert on our affections to claim them and draw them to itself.

We climb into manhood over a hilltop which may be a Pisgah of Satan to us, if our hearts are

not loyal to God. Our youth is cut off from us when we pass the wilderness hilltop; and we lose sight of the home where we learned to call God our Father, when we walk down the slope that leads to the plain where men live and work. Our need then is, to take the fellowship of God with us, and to carry His Kingdom within our heart.

*I will give thee*, says Satan. We are always ready to hear that word, and often too willing to welcome it, without enough scrutiny of the gift's moral quality, and of the source it comes from and the conditions it brings along with it. *I will give thee*, said Satan to the man Jesus, using the terms of his constant appeals to men. Men are so ready to listen to this offer, because life to the ordinary man is so largely a matter of *getting*. It is a scramble in which the man tries how much he can get. Men have an instinct to grasp, a desire to get, and a wish for always more. The unsatisfiedness of most men is the dominant, clamant note of their experience. The love of what we have may be great; the love of what we have not may be much greater, so we are too ready to listen to him who says, *I will give thee*. It is round what men love and

have, and still more round what they love and have not, that the world's battles rage. These make the struggles of life, and urge to its exertions. These also make life's tiredness, which is very sore. We need not listen to Satan when he says *I will give thee*, for, even if he gave his all, it would not satisfy us. There is a room in every heart of man which is larger than all the world can fill; and, ignorantly, men are prone to try and fill it with the world. That room is for the coming of God and for the holding of His throne in the earth, which is in the hearts of men. He also says *I will give*; it is one of His words in Christ. Jesus, who refused to take from Satan, took freely from God; and all He took was not for Himself only, but for all men. The only *I will give* that we need listen to is the promise of God. For love of the world He gave His Son; and His whole life was one great act of giving. The bread and the water of life; the true riches of the heart; rest and peace; the Spirit of God, who is power; His own glory, which He will share with His own,—these are the gifts of Jesus. He only can fill our heart; and the riches and power and glory that are offered by Him, alone can satisfy our need.

When we realise that the essence of the Tempt-

ation of Unhallowed Means was the inducement it offered to Jesus to abandon the spiritual for the temporal and choose the world instead of heaven, we discern that the choice which was set before Him is one that is offered to us also every day. We have a strong kinship with this world—with its pleasures, its petty busy-ness, its sinfulness. There is a whole world of truth in that saying of S. Paul : “ If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing : in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving.”<sup>1</sup> We see the god of this world tempt Jesus with his all. We in our smaller measure are tempted with the same things. They are put before our eyes, as S. Paul’s vivid picture has it, “ that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.”<sup>1</sup> Let us remember that these are the things which were rejected by Jesus, that we might refuse them after Him.

It is not only in large things that this temptation comes to us. A small thing close to our eyes may shut out all the heavens and all the light of the sun. And so in moral seeing : a trifle seized or sought with passion “ means the whole world ” to us, as we say ; and it is the common

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4 (R.V.).

and contemptible trifles that are always within our arm's length that may hinder our sight of heaven and of the power and glory of God. These may suffice to tempt our homage to the world's king and away from God. Jesus was tempted with all the power and glory of all the world ; we may not be offered so much as a few more pounds to our income, nor even so much as a snatch advantage in business. But constantly we are offered the citizenship of the world instead of the citizenship of heaven. And when worldly interests obtrude themselves and claim in our affections the room of higher things, or when we regulate our conduct by the dictates of self-interest instead of emulating the unselfishness of Jesus, then, in our small way, we are tempted as Jesus was in His great way. This is the struggle of our religious life : to live with our hearts in heaven while our feet and hands walk this world and work in it. Jesus chose the worship of God, and espoused His service at the hardest ; and out of His experience of this trial and decision He asks the question : " What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? " He asks us, that we should answer with the consecration of our hearts and the obedience of our lives ungrudgingly given to God. And this denial of self is the way to real control of the



world, which comes by detachment from earth and citizenship in heaven.

When Jesus says, *Get thee hence, Satan*, His answer has a note of command and finality which is absent from His former words in response to the Tempter. But He still speaks as a man, and quotes God's Law for men. We must notice that, as a man, Jesus uses the language and tone of command towards the Devil. Satan's kingship in the world is not absolute or unlimited. The world is his place ; its things are his possession ; men are subject to him in so far as they are enslaved by sin. But there is in manhood the capacity for mastery over evil and its king. This we see in the manhood of Jesus when He bids Satan to be gone. The power of Satan lies in the material influence which he wields and in the moral control which he exerts. But the spirit of man cannot be subject to Satan save voluntarily, by choice. The soul of man is by nature nearer to God than to the world, and it is made for direct subjection to Him. Therefore this is the right of men : to bid back Satan. The power to command the Tempter belongs to us all. It is ours to exercise. If our spirits are subject to Satan, it is by our choice, in which we have refused the sovereignty

of God before we have given allegiance to His enemy. In the close of the recorded Temptations of Jesus we see the possible and only right end of all our temptations : the defeat and dismissal of the Tempter. " Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you," says S. James ; and we may read this as a commentary on the triumphant close to the Wilderness Temptation of our Lord. This is its moral and application to ourselves in all our case and circumstances. Resist, and the strength of God is ours, and His victory is assured.

*It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.* The end of the Temptation is a word of God. This is for our example. If Satan have the last word in temptation, then he persists in his strength and urgent assault. If we have the last word, that may not avail to silence and banish him. But if we give the last word of our conflict to the God of our help, then in Him we are victorious ; and our success is not a snatched respite, but a lasting control, which shall be ready for any return of our enemy's attack.

The last word of the Temptation of Jesus is the first word of God's Law. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God* : it is the First Commandment,

which was spoken long ages before to Israel in the wilderness. *Him only shalt thou serve*: when Jesus takes this word to Himself, He embraces obedience and goes towards the service which He loves. The note of this Law, which He now professes as His rule, is the same as that of His words as He came to be baptized by John—the fulfilment of all righteousness. Jesus will leave conflict for labour. After His thrice-repeated profession of allegiance, He will go to practise loyalty. This is the order of life and service. The end of temptation, in which we suffer and resist, is the beginning of active obedience and aggressive work for God. Henceforward Jesus met temptation only in His work. That is where all His followers ought to meet it—there, and there only. We may be blessed in the temptations of preparation and of activity, but hardly can we be blessed in those of idleness. The way of worship is the way of strength. The way of activity is the path of peace.

Of the three Temptations which are recorded, only one was presented in a scene and with materials peculiar to the Wilderness. This pictures what is true in our experience.

There are trials of the desert, such as hunger

and passion and faithlessness. In these we seem left alone in a want or a peril to which God has abandoned us.

There are temptations of the temple top, in which we are invited not to abandon faith but to pervert it, and to abuse our privilege and God's grace. When we are in the place of worship, let us remember that up there is the ledge where Satan stood with Jesus to cast Him down. When we are in the streets, even of the Holy City, the flight of Satan is over us, and his watchful eye can follow the busy network of our ways.

But, on the watch-tower of insight and inspiration and wide outlook, his assaults may be strongest and most bold. There we learn of the powers that rule in this world, in all the wideness of their scope and the depth of their foundations. There we see the reins of this world's power gathered in the Tempter's hand. The brightness of the glory of the world is centred in the crown that sits on Satan's brow. We are in the midst of the toils of those things in which he is supreme. If there is any earthly ambition in our heart, he can fulfil it; if any sense of greatness in our mind, he is greater, and we cannot rise above his power. And God has placed us in this principdom of

Satan : He leaves us here. He has put within us that urgent spirit which was made for mastery over earth's dead things. Can He blame us if we meet the kingly eye of Satan and give him the homage of our inferior wit and strength? Can He judge us if we touch the Sceptre that has the only evident authority in all the world?

Our case is hard. Our trial is great. God knows it, and pities us. It was to meet this case that He sent Jesus to our help. He has shown a higher Kingship than the world could know, and revealed a wider sovereignty than its breadth is great enough to hold. Also, He showed a perfect escape and victory when He met those toils and assaults which were too subtle and too strong for us to unravel and withstand. See, then, the greatness of Jesus in His refusal to sin. Look on the majesty of His humility. Turn from the gaudy lustre of Satan to see in Him the beauty of Heaven. What are glory and power compared with purity and love? What is the empire of the world when seen from the throne of God, or even from the footstool of His service? Look thence and see the inheritance which was Christ's and is ours, and which He was tempted to barter away : then know what Jesus did for us in the Wilderness and on the Cross.



CHAPTER XII.  
HORROR AND HEALING.

*Then the Devil leaveth Him ; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.—MATT. iv. 11.*



## CHAPTER XII.

### HORROR AND HEALING.

THE Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness is full of wonder and of meaning ; but it is far more full of instruction than of mystery. The simplicity of the narrative marks its inspiration and truth. No mere invention could have shown that direct glance which goes straight to the moral and spiritual significance of Jesus' conflict, unfascinated by its weird accompaniments. There is no savour of occultism here, nor any aspect of mere wizardry. The whole vein is that of bald fact and terrible reality. On this account, we must the more earnestly seek and grasp the meaning of what is told us. And, with this page open before us, we may do so without any fear of being misled into extravagance by the emphasising of details and indications. It is for that they are given us ; and may God give us insight to understand them.

Remember the amazing trial to which Jesus

in His Temptation has been subjected. Recall His isolation and stern ecstasy during forty days and forty nights. Realise the subtlety of Satan's snares and the strength of his assaults. See him personally present as a cunning counsellor of evil, and a princely patron decked with the insignia of a real royalty. See him stand by Jesus and point the Saviour's hungry eyes to the water-worn stones of the desert, in their mocking resemblance to cakes of the bread which He craved for His very life. Conceive, again, the rapture to the Temple ledge, and understand the fascination of the giddy depth below. Was He merely "tempted like as we are?" It shames us to be told that; so immeasurably greater was His trial than ours. It seems greater than mortal frame and nerve could bear. Yet Jesus bore it; and the health of His mind and the soundness of His faith are shown in the way He could raise a steady eye to God's throne, and give to His word an undistracted ear.

There is a great meaning in the fact that the Temptation story does not end with those words, *The Devil leaveth Him*, but goes on to tell of the coming of angels and their ministry. This points to the very centre of our Lord's experience as it

affected His humanity, and casts a light back on what has gone before.

That last Assault of the Prince of the world might well have a stunning effect even upon Jesus. Its flash of dazzling revelation might tax the balance even of His super-ordinary steadiness. So, when the challenge comes, *Fall down and worship me*, we see Jesus avert His eyes from the Tempter's brilliancy; and while He says, *Get thee gone*, He turns to God and stretches forth His hands to seek and claim the delivering grasp of rescue from a fearful strait. That moment of appeal saw the escape of Jesus from Satan's importunities. The final incitement to treason so stirred His loyalty to God that the links that bound Him to Heaven were drawn tight and close in a spasm of yearning desire. His soul reached out to God, and His heart clave to Him. It was thus that the angels came. They were not sent to make up any lack in the power of Jesus to resist in the crisis of His trial. It was simply that He so recoiled from the inducements of Hell, and so sought the fellowship of Heaven, that the one went and the other came, spontaneously and of necessity.

That had been no mere word which Jesus had said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by*

*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* The greatest hunger of these many days had been the hunger of His heart for God. And now it would no longer be denied. It had been starved while the presence of evil, and its conflict, preyed upon the vitals of His soul. And when Satan said, *Fall down and worship me*, we see Jesus turn away in giddy horror, lest His fainting body should succumb and fall prone in the mere semblance of unlawful homage. With the last strength of His manhood He stretched out hands of appeal to God, and sent to Heaven an urgent call that the arm of God would take and hold Him.

So great were the love and desire that welled up in Jesus towards His Father, and so great the response of God's heart towards Him, that the place where He stood became heaven upon earth, while He stood there held out to God for His embrace. He was kindred with earth, but still more closely kin to Heaven. His call pierced the barriers of separation; the interposing powers of Hell were swept into an instant flight. Deep called to deep; like the flash of lightning between thunder-clouds, the fellowship of God rushed to meet the welcome of the man Jesus. He claimed it, and in answer it claimed Him.

This is what the coming of the angels means ; and thus they came. The tide of heavenly love that rose in Jesus' heart was met by a great tide of kindred love that swelled towards Him out of heaven ; and these met in a visible concourse of angelic presences that gathered round the Man who first from earth had chosen, ay, compelled, the full fellowship of God. The angels did not compass the deliverance of Jesus ; nor did they merely celebrate it in a pageant of glorious rejoicing. Their presence *was* His victory in its outward showing. In the hour of Satan's majesty and insolent assault, the motions of Heaven were so strong in Jesus, that suddenly and with great strength He grasped the very heart of Heaven and drew it to Himself. And at once there was not room about Him for the world's Prince, nor any place for Hell to plant the foot of insubordination against God. When Jesus with the gesture of His soul's command said *Begone*, He hurtled Satan thence. On behalf of humanity He made insurrection from sin ; and His act was a signal in all heaven, so that the hosts of it gathered round Him to celebrate the new great warfare of the Son of God, which, in the end, should oust the Devil from both earth and heaven.

Can we believe that the glory of Heaven was only around Jesus at this time? Nay! It was upon Him and in Him, and shone out from Him. Long afterwards, in agitated prayer to God regarding the trial of the Cross which was before Him, Jesus was suddenly transfigured in company with Moses and Elias, and in presence of a well-loved three of His disciples. And He was transfigured now, amid that band of bright angels. There was no man there to see and tell of it; and Jesus did not tell such things. Yet we may see our Lord clothed in transfigured radiancy, and in aspect not inferior to His visitants.

We see here the triumphant emergence of Jesus from Temptation; we see Him, by faith and obedience and heavenward desire, banish Hell and summon the visible attendance of very Heaven. And the way that Jesus found, out of the snares of sin and the pressure of its strength upon His weakness, is the one way still that we must find and use for our escape. I shall live by the word of God, He said; and that we too must fearlessly choose and trust for our life. I will not tempt the Lord My God, He said; and we must humbly submit to what is narrow and hard, foregoing all that is not offered us by God. I will worship the Lord, and Him only will I serve, said

Jesus ; and the protest of His allegiance became a cry for the presence of His King. And straightway He found Himself in the ante-chamber of God's Majesty, surrounded by His angels ; and Satan was gone, and His heart was embraced by Heaven.

That impulsive entreaty of Heaven which we see in Jesus' heart as He turns away from sin ; that outstretching of His soul to God for a fellowship that shall banish the enticements of evil and its insolence, is what ought to be in our heart too. It must be there, if we are to conquer in temptation with a victory like our Lord's. If we fall where He stood firm ; if we falter where He prevailed, it is for lack of that heavenward glance that can catch the eye of God, and that desire that can bring His presence to our aid and disarm the strongest powers of Hell. Let us think. How do we, when we are tempted ? Our many failures tell how often we have cherished the suggestions of evil instead of recoiling from them ; how often we have welcomed the offers of Satan when we ought to have rejected them. It is in these ways that failure comes, and the fall into sin. When ensnared into treason against God, we are willingly betraying and betrayed. But if at any time, when we are solicited by evil, we turn our mind and

heart to God, He gives a fellowship that Hell cannot abide, but is gone from in dismay. If we will but suffer the tide of God's Spirit to rise up in our heart, it shall swell till it meets the ocean of Heaven's strong succour, the sound of whose waves is victorious praise; and these, meeting, shall make one full flood to bear our spirit to God's throne. Thus, in our measure, we may know the experience of Jesus when His need and desire called Heaven to Him, and made a temple of the devil-haunted desert; and we too may find the place of our temptation prove to be the ante-room of God.

We may connect the need of Jesus, to which the angels ministered, not only with the great strain of His whole Temptation, which was now accumulated on Him, but specially with the unnerving trial of that last assault of the Prince of the world. This view may give us some practical suggestions regarding phases of experience, which, if they are not common, yet are frequent enough to require that we be prepared to understand them, in ourselves or others.

There is a point in the Temptation, where the awe of Jesus' conflict amounts to horror. We can



hardly read, without shuddering, that impious challenge of the Devil : *Fall down and worship me*. Doubtless, it was this scene that inspired those mediæval superstitions which said that men could sell their souls to Satan magically, and gain thereby an occult power. The day of that ignorance is largely past. But still there are some who are plagued with the horror of blasphemy, and suffer a sore agony of soul. When Satan received permission to tempt Job, he said to God, "He will curse Thee to Thy face;" and he used the sufferer's wife as his mouthpiece when she said, "Curse God, and die." That pictures what some suffer from vivid imagination in league with unstrung nerve. The horror of this experience consists in the recoil of the heart from the blasphemies which seem whispered in the ear, and almost adopted in the mind. Its terror depends upon the weakness and self-distrust which, in their bewilderment, fear that the evil thoughts have been born of the heart's own sin, and that the guilt of them is on the soul they torture. As Bunyan, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, puts it, plainly writing from his own experience of this thing: "The Pilgrim is so confounded that he verily thinks the grievous blasphemies to be his own." Then the darkness of the valley is around, and the face

of God is hid as if behind a cloud of unpardonable sin.

The Evil one may work upon our weakness and our fear, to upset our reason and our faith. But Jesus Himself was tempted, in like manner, with suggestions from the very mouth of Hell; and He is with us within the shadow of the darkest cloud our mind or heart can know. He will lead us out again into the light. This is a temptation of the wilderness; and God may send us there to learn our own weakness and His strength.

But we must not ascribe such experiences too readily or exclusively to a spiritual source, or give them a significance that is entirely spiritual. They may mean malady of body rather than of soul, and may be more fitly ministered to by medicine than by the Church. The nervous and mental merge into the spiritual; and these may be confounded when there is somewhat that is morbid in our state.

It is significant that the occasion of the angels' ministry to Jesus was not during His Temptation, but after it. He needed no angelic support to enable Him to oppose and overcome the Devil. But He did afterwards need recovering from strain and shock. And, in this, our

experience is like His. In the excitement of conflict and decision we may be strong. There is health in active exercise of soul. But there is a special pain and danger in hours of reaction and reflection, when our mind and feelings have leisure to turn in upon ourself. Our strife with the Devil may nerve us to courage and strength while it lasts; its passing may leave us unstrung and full of uneasiness and fear. The inward echoes of past conflict may sadly distract us, if we listen to them in our heart. And the thought of things in imagination may be hurtful; for there is a power in imagination that surpasses the strength of fact.

Here comes in our need of healing ministry to meet our tendency to what is morbid. Those who fear blasphemy are not those who blaspheme; they suffer a malaise which is more akin to nightmare than to sin, and whose immediate cause should be sought in a physical rather than a spiritual fault. If we sin against the Spirit of God, it shall be in acts and not words, and in affection rather than thought. There is a great fatigue after spiritual strain, because our soul is tenanted within a body which is feeble at the best. There is an exhaustion after ecstasy, whose collapse is physical, and must not be confounded

with the inertia of unfaithfulness or with lapse into sin. There is a depression after inspiration, which aptly simulates ungodly despair, and is amongst the deepest pains the heart can know. We climb no height of emotional experience, but there is a dark valley beneath it; and our path lies down there. On the height, we must see the valley before we enter it, and take with us the understanding there gained, to explain and alleviate its gloom.

This does not concern everyone; but it closely touches some. They need to be told this, and to remember and quietly allow for it. There is enough pain for all of us, without self-torture. There is a place for healing ministry in many a Christian experience; and the time to seek it may often come, while we live the life of heaven, as Jesus did, in an earthborn body, and in the midst of evil things. We do not live in a day of visible contest with Satan; and we neither expect, nor do we need, the evident ministry of holy angels to attend us. But we must take what God has given us for the health of our mind as well as of our soul. All life and work and religion may be very difficult to the man who needs a tonic or a holiday. These are the ministry many a one requires.

Again, we may believe that the chief ministry the angels brought to Jesus was just their radiant company. He was not left alone when the Devil left Him. The sorest thing in His Temptation had been its solitariness, and His choicest healing was the end of that. And, if only for health's sake, we ought to avoid solitary experiences, when God does not lay these upon us. There is a curative value in fellowship which none can afford to despise; and few, if any, can neglect it without injury.

Besides the ministries of medicine, recreation, and companionship, there is a wonderful healing in healthy activity. This meets those phases of experience in which the inward bulks too large. It is not wholesome when we find ourselves, as it were, in a wilderness of self; when the world retires to a distance and becomes remote and small, and fails to attract and attach our interest. When *our* thought and *our* feelings loom into a morbid prominence, then we require healing; and our cure shall be found in what takes us out of ourself. The world does not revolve round us; when it seems to, that is because we are giddy and ready to sink. It is we who are reeling, not the world. Then we must take hold of the things about us with our mind, and

with the grasp of a busy hand ; for the healing ministry of work is one great help to steadiness, whether of mind or heart or soul.

Let us realise and frankly recognise that we are called to live a life of exertion in spite of our weakness, and of temptation and conquest in spite of our insufficiency. Let us know that this is in the care of God and of our own intelligence, under Him. And let us use all lawful means to healthful ends ; for these are His gifts, in which He ministers assistance to our need.

When we see Jesus transfigured in the moment of His deliverance from the Tempter, let us not fail to realise the great weakness which He suffered even while He was glorified. The bright flame of His Divinity shone in a lamp of human clay, whose fuel was now burning low. As He fainted and fell He was caught and sustained. Not at the feet of Satan did He fall, but into the embrace of the angels of God. He was cherished in the bosom of Heaven come down to earth.

This is a beautiful fact as it concerns our Saviour ; also it is a picture and example of God's care of all His children in the hour of their greatest trial and overwhelming weakness.

Whether in active life or in the article of death, the ministry of Heaven is near and ready for those who turn to God. The call of our necessity shall be answered from above. When we are about to faint, we shall feel the sustaining hold of our Father. When we seem about to fall helpless at the feet of our oppressor, we shall find ourselves in the bosom of angelic ministration. It was thus with Jesus ; and thus it shall be with His brethren, when, like Him, they call Heaven to their aid.





CHAPTER XIII.

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!”

*John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth the sin of the world.—*  
JOHN i. 29.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!”

**I**N leaving the study of the Temptation of Jesus, we may see Him as He came out of the Wilderness, straight from His conflict and victory and from the ministry of angels. He went back to Jordan, where John was still baptizing; and we must stand beside the Baptist, and wait for His coming, after these Forty days and nights.

Six weeks ago, Jesus had come there to be baptized; and John had looked upon the chaste, fresh beauty of His youthful manhood, and marked the calmness of His purity and strength. John had dealt readily and sternly with all other candidates; but before this One he hesitated. In Jesus' presence his message seemed to fail him, and his rite to become meaningless. But Jesus accepted the Baptism, and, so doing, identified Himself with the repentance of His brethren, and expressed His desire and expecta-

tion towards the Kingdom of God which John had heralded.

Then He had gone away into the Wilderness, with the witness of the Spirit on His head, that had been humbly bowed in acceptance of the Baptist's rite. And every day for forty days John had scanned the crowds about him, and whispered in his heart: "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."<sup>1</sup> This became his answer to the deputation of Priests and Levites who came from Jerusalem to ask the Baptist, "Who art thou?" and it shows how eagerly he looked for the return of Jesus. The day after that answer, Jesus came. And as John looked on Him—how eagerly!—there broke from his lips that strange impromptu cry: *Behold the Lamb of God, which is bearing the sin of the world.*<sup>2</sup> Our versions give a theological interpretation: "which taketh away the sin." This is misplaced and misleading; it blinds our view of what John saw. His speech may point forward to the Cross; but, first and chiefly, it points back to the Wilderness.

What John sees is the marks of the long Temptation time, written deep and plain upon

<sup>1</sup> John i. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 29, marg.

the face of Jesus. How changed it is! How strangely altered is that fresh beauty of six weeks ago! Then, He was the pure picture of unsullied youth, crowned with the strength of manhood. His calm eye was full of the repose of untried readiness. Now, He is marred yet dignified by long pain and conflict. That ennobled beauty has been bought by suffering. That strength has the aspect of hard-won victory. And as John looks in mingled wonder, love, and awe, the explanation bursts upon him as a revelation. He sees the figure of a spotless victim pierced by the sacrificial knife. So he speaks this cry of anguished joy: The Lamb of God! The Lamb of God! Already, He bears upon His blameless heart the world's sin. Already, the pain of suffering with men and for them tears His life, and the iron of sore sacrifice has pierced His soul. He is on God's altar, and He bleeds.

This is how John saw the Saviour when He came from the conflict of the Wilderness. So let us see Him, if we would understand the Temptation of Jesus.



## APPENDIX.





## APPENDIX, I.

NOTE FROM PAGE 31.

### THE NUMBER *FORTY*.

THE associations of the number *forty* in this connection are interesting and significant. Moses is represented as having thrice fasted for this period: when he received the Law in the Mount (Ex. xxiv. 18), and twice afterwards. The three occasions are gathered together in Deut. ix. 9, 18, 25. Elijah went fasting to Horeb during *forty* days (1 Kings xix. 8).

The symmetry of the use of the number *forty* in this relation, taken along with its evidently approximate use in other connections, cannot fail to suggest that a symbolical meaning is attached to it. It certainly here means a fast prolonged to the utmost known in human experience, and beyond the utmost limit of endurance possible to human nature in the normal state and level of its life.

## APPENDIX, II.

NOTE FROM PAGE 60.

Εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ.

BOTH υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ are found in the Gospels. We note the absence of the article here ; υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is the complement, and the subject σὺ is not expressed. It has been noticed<sup>1</sup> that, where the article occurs, the subject is found expressed (σὺ or οὗτος), and it has been held that υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is exactly equivalent in meaning to ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. But the occurrence of the article at one time, and its suppression at another, cannot be fully accounted for in this merely grammatical way. The fact seems to be, that the expression of the subject coincides with the ascription or the mention of a definite Messianic title ; that the predicate ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ has more content than υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, which is a descriptive identification or classification of Jesus, devoid of Messianic reference.

“When the title is found with the article after a verb of existence, the identity of the subject with a person, to whom it peculiarly belonged, is the

<sup>1</sup> Middleton, *On the Greek Article*, 2nd ed. p. 178.

predicate, without particular reference to the meaning of the words themselves; and when it is anarthrous, the attributes signified by the words *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* are the predicate, without regard to their special association with the person of the Messiah."<sup>1</sup>

"The Tempter's challenge to our Lord is not, If Thou be the Messiah; but one of more subtle and keener provocation, If Thou be God's Son, and possessed of extraordinary powers in virtue of that divine generation."<sup>2</sup>

"Both Matthew and Luke have *υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*, without the article, the reference being to the relationship to God rather than to the office of Messiah."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the Gospels the definite or titular form, *The Son of God*, is never found as given to Jesus, except by His disciples as an expression of true faith. It is used by the Baptist (John i. 34), by Nathanael (John i. 50), by Martha (John xi. 27), by the Evangelist himself (John xx. 31). The enemies of Jesus also use the definite title when they ask Him if He claims to be *The Son*

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Green, *Grammar of the New Testament*, Ed. 1842, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Green, *ibid.* p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Plummer, D.D., *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke; in loc.*

*of God* (Matt. xxvi. 63 ; Luke xxii. 70), the Son of the Blessed (Mark xiv. 61). The only apparent exception to the absence of the title, except when ascribed to Jesus by disciples, is found in Mark iii. 11 and Luke iv. 41, where the witness of the spirit-possessed is quoted generally ; but when we hear one possessed of a devil testifying, it is the indefinite form that occurs (Mark v. 7 ; Luke viii. 28). The reader of the *textus receptus* will find the form, *The Son of God*, given once, as used by Satan, in S. Luke's account of the Temptation ; but the article is not found in the best MSS.

The same indefinite *God's Son*, or *a Son of God*, is found in the jibe of the passers-by at Calvary (Matt. xxvii. 40), also in the taunt of the rulers (Matt. xxvii. 43), and the testimony of the Roman centurion on duty at the Crucifixion (Mark xv. 39). This last case is the only one in which our Revisers have indicated the difference between the two forms. It is done in the margin, apparently under pressure of the fact that the Roman officer was, in all probability, an uninstructed heathen.

It is important to note the absence of even the mention of the peculiar Sonship of Jesus by any save disciples, except when His enemies designed to provoke Him to what they counted

blasphemy. The theological conception is seen to be strange to the contemporaries of our Lord; and the faith of the disciples is thrown out in a more bold relief when we realise this.

The Hebrews believed in the existence of an order of beings superior in grade to men, but subordinate to God. They occasionally mixed in or interfered with the affairs of men. We find them in Gen. vi. 2, where they are represented as intermarrying with "the daughters of men." In Job i. 6 and ii. 1 they are seen presenting themselves before the Lord: "And Satan came also among them, to present himself before the Lord." Having this element of popular belief in mind, we are not required to suppose that Satan, in the Temptation, formally recognised the Divinity of Jesus; rather, he addresses Him as one of his own order of supra-human or angelic beings.

We do not need the witness of Satan. The witness of Jesus to His own rank and title, though rare, is clear (Matt. xvi. 17; Mark xiv. 61, 62; John ix. 35, 37). Further, in speaking of Himself in relation to the Father, our Lord habitually styled Himself *The Son*. This is the faith which is found without ambiguity in the Epistles, and which has passed into the assured belief of the Church.

## APPENDIX, III.

## NOTE FROM PAGE 130.

τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ.—Matt. iv. 5.

OUR A.V. has it, that Satan set Jesus on *a pinnacle of the Temple*. The familiar “pinnacle” has come out of the translators’ minds and from amongst their preconceptions, for πτερύγιον does not mean *pinnacle*, and the Temple was not a pinnacled building. The R.V. does not greatly improve matters by substituting *the* for *a* pinnacle. It, however, gives the key to a right interpretation by restoring the definite article which King James’ translators had ignored, and by the marginal note that πτερύγιον means *wing*. In seeking to realise the precise scene of this Temptation, we have to inquire what is meant by the *wing*, or rather *winglet*, of the Temple. Holtzmann says it may be either (1) the extremity of a gable’s ledge, or (2) the actual summit of the Royal Hall. Some take the word to apply to an out-building, and support this by the use of τοῦ ἱεροῦ instead of τοῦ ναοῦ. And Solomon’s porch and the στοά βασιλική are pointed to as answering the requirements of our passage, especially since each of them surmounts a precipice. But our view of the

ulterior purpose of this Temptation prevents our admitting a position from which one would leap into obscurity. Surely the same *πετεύγιον* is referred to, when Hegesippus tells us of S. James' martyrdom that he was pushed over from τὸ *πετεύγιον τοῦ ναοῦ*, the main building being certainly referred to in this case. From the word *πετεύγιον* itself we may learn at once, that it means a projection, and one in a lateral direction. The term has probably come from comparing, to the wings of a bird, the sloping and projecting ledge at the top of a gable, or the similar ledge often surmounting a door or a window.

While our A.V.'s disregard of the article is remarkable, our reassertion of it need not lead us to require a uniquely conspicuous place to justify its use. It more probably points to a general architectural feature of the Temple buildings. This is consistent with the fact that Hesychius gives *πετεύγιον* as equivalent to *ἀκρωτήριον*, which may mean simply any projection. So we conceive the place indicated to be a projecting ledge running along a wall-top. And we take the use of the article to be like our use of it when we speak of *the gutter* of any building without claiming distinction for it, or for ourselves any familiar acquaintance with architectural or economic details.

## APPENDIX, IV.

## NOTE FROM PAGE 35.

THE RELATION OF HUMAN NATURE TO  
SIN: ESPECIALLY IN JESUS.

WE learn from the Gospels that the preparation of Jesus for His successful conflict with evil began before His birth; and, while we reverently believe the fact of His extraordinary generation, we may acknowledge that we have no understanding of it. The origin of all human life is wrapped in mystery; it may well be an impenetrable veil that surrounds the Divine-human birth of Jesus.

There are, however, two beliefs into either of which we might readily fall, and both of which we must avoid. *First*, we may not believe that Jesus got His human nature from another than a human source; that God, contrary to appearance, gave Him a new and specially-created nature of the sort called *human*. In that case, the link that binds Him to us were not one of relationship, but merely the shadowy tie of resemblance; and we could find little meaning in His outwardly ordinary birth and life, if these covered a nature similar to



ours in kind but alien in source. *Second*, we may not believe that, in the transmission of the human nature of Jesus, a miracle prevented the transmission of an evil taint which is present in the nature of other men. That would make Jesus' victory over sin the result of a mechanical miracle of moral filtration; and, giving God the Holy Spirit that victory prior to His birth, would leave us one who could by no means be tempted like as we are, if we have qualities inherent in and essential to our nature, which were absent in Him.

Both of these views are easily understood, and afford a ready solution of the difficulties which we feel regarding the Temptation of our Lord; but they alike utterly spoil, for us, the victorious sinlessness of our Brother, the man Christ Jesus. They rob of all meaning and help the assurance that He can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the sinlessness of Jesus, along with His true humanness, we may see that our original sinfulness lies, not in a taint which is essential to our nature, but in alienation from God, which makes communion with Him impossible. Man is born into estrangement from

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

God, and is therefore obnoxious to all evil, while cut off from good. From this point of view we see, how the union of the Divine with human nature in our Lord's person did actually in His person abolish that source of sin which makes us all sinners by birth. While our estrangement cuts us off from God and His holy life, in Jesus we find human nature filled to the full with the Divine Spirit; and thus Jesus met Temptation, not only with His pure heavenly strength, but with every essential feature of that human nature which He had received in His human birth.

The primary and chief super-ordinary element in the human nature of Jesus was one of relation with God. In this regard He was perfect, and from this flowed His other perfections. We shall best understand the Temptation of Jesus if we realise that, while there was much about His manhood that was extraordinary to men, there was nothing that was unnatural to human nature. He was more human than His brethren of mankind, because He was perfect, which they are not. The Temptations of Jesus were the trials of an ideal, because a perfect, man. On this account they were Temptations such as are common to humanity.

Man spiritual cannot be considered apart from man physical. Our moral character and

life are largely influenced by their organ, the body. Sin cannot be rightly dealt with as a theological abstraction, but must be recognised, as it is in the Bible, as a practical fact. The modern view of heredity supplies a sufficient and very impressive doctrine of original sin, which is almost Augustinian in intensity, if rightly apprehended. We inherit in our physical organism many traces of evil practice and wrong habit in our ancestry. These, though not essential to human nature, are actual in it, and these occasion a predisposition to sin. Because in none is the physical organ of life perfect, original sin is a fact in all men, though a quantity varying in each.

The relations of body and soul, which have only in recent times begun to be investigated, have a great importance for our understanding of the nature of sin. The fact that man, who is a moral and spiritual being, lives his life in a physical body, implies sin, necessitates it, unless the physical organ of his life is perfectly controlled by spiritual impulse, purpose, and direction. The imperfectness of this control is the fruitful source of sin; the perfecting of it is the work of God in Christ and by His Spirit. The perfection of it is seen in Jesus by virtue of His measureless

endowment with that Spirit. Hence His sinlessness while living a true human life in the body, the organ of human life.

The sinlessness of Jesus is placed above argument, by the perfect picture which in the Gospels is mirrored by artless love. "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of Eternity." Having, then, this one window of unbroken rays, let us forbear to peer with the prism of our angular intelligence, and open wide our hearts to be bathed in the flood of its purifying light.



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