THE BREAD PROBLEM OF THE WORLD,

OUR LORD'S FIRST TEMPTATION.

CHRIST comes to the baptism, finding in that ritual the expression of thoughts with which He is labouring. These thoughts, emphasized by the ritual, find their antitheses in the temptation. A ritual nourishes the roots of the thoughts it expresses. He is on the banks of the Jordan in a human society which shades down from John to the basest of men. Whatever men may be, the law of humanity remains, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." To be human, in the ideal of humanity, is all righteousness. Christ, in baptism, accepts this humanity.

After the ritual, our Lord hurries into a wild, weird, lone waste, carrying a flood of great thoughts, to inspect the elements of the situation. The creation of a spiritual humanity of a superior order is the gravity upon His mind. He is with Himself in this wilderness, engaged upon the plan of His own being and the specifications of the architecture before Him. He who creates must have a plan. He chooses His methods, and finds definitions for Himself. He looks to His destination, and settles Himself into its terms and limits. The temptations, what we call the temptations, are surveys of the situation; and from them came the battle of alternatives, competitions of methods, divergences from the predestined ideals, which lend themselves as oppositions in the scheme of things.

In this collision of procedure He encounters the Bread Problem of the world. The problem of food lies in the very core of humanity, inheres in its very structure. In the earliest look we give to our being, as we front the adventure of it, we find that our food is big in the schedule. He who wishes to teach men how to live, he who would prescribe methods of life, he who would be a regenerator of

faculty and feeling, must adjust himself to this question. Christ had a Bread Problem for Himself and us to solve. It will be my aim to argue that the Food Problem, which is the physical basis of man, suggests to our Lord certain modifications of the Divine programme He holds.

Three introductory explanations are necessary before we can reach the heart of our subject, to clear the ground of the argument, and they apply to the three temptations.

First, that these temptations must be strictly regarded as visions and debates of the mind. The arena on which the battle of alternatives and competitions is fought is the spirit. It is possible for the devil to carry Christ on his shoulders, and actually place him on one of the spikes or finials of the Temple towers, though to many minds it must appear a clumsy procedure for the sublime purpose of a temptation. But it is not possible for the devil to place Christ on any mountain in Palestine or elsewhere where He could literally see the kingdoms of the world. To see with the eye the kingdoms of the world means seeing Babylon, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome; the legions of Rome in their military accoutrement, and flush of victory; the commerce of Corinth carried in its ships and stored in its warehouses; the philosophy of Athens in the manuscripts of Euripides and Plato; the literature of the classic age in the library of Alexandria. This is a sheer visual impossibility. The spectacle of the kingdoms is mental. If the literal and physical break down in the third temptation, they fail equally with the first and second. The temptations are thoughts, looks of the mind, inspections of the situation, repulsions and attractions in the scheme of life appointed to Him. A temptation is a superior plan of action struggling with the inferior, the will with its determinations facing the Divine predestinations.

The subjectivity of the temptations is further confirmed

by the order preserved in Luke's narrative. He makes Matthew's third temptation to be the second. Canon Farrar in his classic *Life of Christ*, adopting the traditional view that the first temptation was addressed to the hunger of Christ, and the second to a fall from a giddy height, very properly adds, "both orders cannot be right," and then makes an apology for inspiration. But both orders are right, if the temptations are in the realm of the subjective. The thoughts crossed and recrossed each other, occurred and recurred, and the record is simply a classified summary of forty days' reflections and examinations. Any order now becomes right.

A *second* explanation respects the nature of the literature before us, which is poetic. The historians got their report of the thought of the forty days from Christ Himself, and He is the Master of parables. A diary of forty days' intense studies and rapt surveys, of the mental absorption which had suspended the functions of the body, cannot be compressed in ten lines of print. The journal is turned into a poem; the report is partly dramatic, partly epic in form, a kind of literature not known in the modern world, and belongs to the genius of the Hebrew nation. In the first chapter of Genesis we have the history of tens of thousands of years, the chemistry and physiology, the flora and fauna, the geology and biology, of millenniums of time condensed into one page. Here we have wide ranges of visions extracted into ten lines. This manner of literature is only possible to the poetic faculty, and probably to the Shemitic species of poetry. We see the artist, who can make a picture of leagues of cloud and miles of mountain by the mixture of a few colours, by a few strokes of the brush, on a canvas a foot square. The poet can idealize the infinite in a few similitudes. The register of these forty days is the painting of an artist with a creative mind. The literature is not historical writing; it is not a chronicle. It is

history sublimed, facts idealized, details generalized, and a poem got. It sums up as on painted canvas, on statued marble, in statuesque, the history of an unique situation. Poetry is often superior to history, always nearest to the human understanding.

The three temptations are a poem, in which the Divine theory of Christ's situation is pictured, in which human life appears in its laws, limitations, first principles, inner meanings. There is a glow and thrill in the story which only poetry could import into it. It is curious to note that Milton's *Paradise Regained* is wholly these temptations in a modern epic garb, as if the poet's genius had perceived that Christ's entire mission was mirrored in them.

Third. The literal history is made altogether improbable, and the exclusive mental sphere of the temptations made certain, by the fact reported by Mark and Luke, that the temptations were distributed over the whole of the forty days, and are not concentrated into three intense activities at the end of them, which last is the reading uniformly given by interpreters. It is said, "And 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." This diffusion of the temptations requires that we separate the hunger of Christ from the incitement to turn stones into bread. It requires us to take the first two verses of Matthew's and Luke's narrative as the historical introduction not to the first temptation only, but to all three. We confuse history with poetry, and the historic introduction with the ideal story, when we connect the hunger with the first temptation. The order in which the temptations are given depends upon the standpoint of the narrator. The Bread Problem was probably first in time, occurring however again during the forty days. The World Temptation is however the first in order of rank, recurring also all through the forty days. Luke may as well have

put Matthew's third as first, as he has Matthew's third as second.

Our Lord's hunger has no more to do with the first temptation than with the second. We must separate with an accentuated clearness the hunger at the end of the forty days from the proposal to convert stones into bread. Our Lord became hungry after the temptations were past. When the ecstasy of thought, the mental abstraction is over, the temptations are over. When the tension of thought and temptation is past, the body remembers itself, and recovers its suspended functions. When Moses is engrossed giving a constitution to Israel, he neither eats nor drinks. When Christ is thinking out a constitution for the kingdom of the soul, He neither eats nor drinks. The hunger comes when distinctions are got and decisions taken, and the victory is obtained. The conversion of stones into bread was not the trial of a hungry man. The hunger is felt after the abstraction and thought subside, and the temptations belong to the period of abstraction, and depart with it. The hunger is outside the temptation.

The temptations are prefaced by three facts: the locality of the wilderness, the mental entrancement of forty days, the hunger which follows the cessation of the entrancement. There history ends. Then the details of the temptations are reported as idealities, pictured in the form of proposals to convert stones into bread, to take a leap down from the finial of the Temple tower, to accept the offer of the kingdoms of the world. The poetic form of the literature, the thought-sphere of the temptation, the separation of the hunger from the proposal to convert stones into bread, reveal the grandeur of the occasion. If the trial consisted in the pang of hunger, and this as an introductory taste of hardship and a suggested dislike to a mission involving pain, it is poor enough. But the address is made to the deepest that is in Christ, to the philanthropy of His soul

and the pain of philanthropy, and to His mission as the Creator of a new quality of the human soul. It is not mere endurance, physical and moral, that is tested here, but it is a vision of the structure of human nature which is given to Christ, and the problem is handed to Him to develop a new quality in it. This is not an address to the luxurious use of power, nor is it intended to rouse a disappointment with His situation because He was hungry. Every temptation is a revelation, and this is a revelation of the forces needed to make men Christian. The temptation to convert stones into bread is a temptation to the use of inferior forces, which will be short and transient methods with human nature. It is a modification of the original plan in the interests of philanthropy. It is a subtle seduction.

The natural basis of this subtle seduction is the Bread Problem of our world, and its relations both to the comfort of men and to the spiritualities which Christ has come to introduce. Our Lord has just come from the artisan life in Nazareth. Nazareth is a town notorious for its poverty and ill conditions of human nature. In village huts He had seen and felt how hard it is for men to make their daily bread, and what bread is made is mostly coarse, scanty, hard fare, unworthy of us. The normal condition is one of bare subsistence; chronic poverty is man's outward estate. The comfortable classes make a limited upper ten thousand. The masses and the millions live on the edge of famine, with just enough to pay rent and taxes, make ends meet, and life passable. We begin at the point of nothing, and continue to the end apprentices to labour, clerks to industry, and masters only of want. The harvest of the year is always trembling in an uncertain balance; sunshine and rain seem to be badly proportioned, frost and heat are untimely, we look ever with anxiety to the autumn fates. This universal, abnormal destitution of the human

race engages the earliest thought of Him who accepts the position of its chief and Redeemer. How want pressed on every side of us, what a hand to mouth struggle it was, and without dignity, how the earth refuses to give us more than dry crusts,—these facts, these humiliations, are a vision to the Head of the race who is considering His plans for the spiritual republic. He naturally encounters on the threshold this primeval, cleaving circumstance, environing human nature as a curse, and apparently degrading it.

To reduce the pressure of this controlling force, to make the terms of natural existence easier, to call up a new history of humanity by removing this Bread Problem, to get this relief as the dominant feature of His work, is the insidious thought which receives the drapery and dramatic force of the words, "Command that these stones be made bread."

The instigation to this thought is in the possession of power. "If Thou art the Son of God, and in the consciousness of power by Thy recent baptism, as solar worlds and planetary conjunctions, light and heat, are at Thy bidding, grow heavier harvests, make Thyself monarch of plenty, make men comfortable, save them by first mitigating their hard outward lot. An acre produces twenty-eight bushels of wheat, cause it to produce one hundred bushels, and the lot is mended, and they will be set free to more elevating occupations." The income per head in Britain is £30, in France £20, in Turkey £4, in India £2. Men are underfed, underclothed, underhoused. Raise this income to £300 a year, and the human conditions will be dignified and sweetened. This is the idea which the allegory of the temptation literature expresses. Wheat is a grass, a wild grass specialized by cultivation. The discovery of another wild grass, capable of an edible variation, hardy, enduring opposite climates of heat and cold, dampness and dryness, holding a heavier head of grain, richer in gluten and starch,

which is within the capabilities of our wild grasses, would materially alter the condition of man's life on earth. This gift of comfort will be a fine foundation on which to rest the spiritualities of the kingdoms. This new enactment by Him who is the Lawgiver of the race would be the best inauguration of the new society to be established. This is a plausible method of procedure, and the devil of a modified programme which appeals to Him.

The address is made to the best in Christ, to the sympathy of the heart. Who that has thought to any purpose, and who carries a feeling in the soul for his race, has not felt the sharpest pang of being that so many of his kind, with noblest possibilities, are badly housed, coarsely fed, rudely dressed? Who that has seen the beauty of the human face, of man and maiden in their prime, and loves a human face by innate attractions within him, and thinks of the poverty, the incapacity, the want of opportunity which are the lot of men, has not felt that the plan of being is too severe, and soothed his pain with the indispensable future which is to compensate humanity for its present suppressions? Patience alone quiets our pain, and in impatience we wait. "Command that these stones be made bread," is the summary of a wish for a swift, short, but unsafe expedient for the elevation of the race. It is philanthropy in a hurry.

The pathos of the soul, the movement of families, the migration of races, the fortunes of nations, and the history of the world, have been inspired by the price of bread.

One of the earliest records of a human sigh expresses the hope of relief from the unending strife of finding bread. In the traditions of the Shemitic race, Lamech is known to have said on the birth of a child, "This same shall comfort us concerning the . . . toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Hebrew nationality has its sources in a famine. The family of Jacob go to Egypt in a dearth of food, and find Joseph superintending a

dearth-oppressed nation. There they remain, and abandon those nomadic habits indigenous to the Shemite, and a national cohesion begins. There the family becomes the nation, and develops its own peculiar genius of religion under the stimulating influences of the wisdom of Egypt. Their last education into nationality was in the want of the wilderness, which left traces in them which were never lost, and to which they turn as unforgotten history. Ruth falls into the royal line of David in the progress of a famine. The Greeks and the Hindus started from the uplands of the Caucasus in search of new lands, when their own native highlands could no longer support the growing population. The fortunes of East and West took colour from the bread migrations of this vigorous Aryan race. That the Greek and Sanscrit languages are varieties of the same language once spoken by the same race is one of the central discoveries of our day.

Plato is writing philosophy when he says, "The body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food."[1] Tacitus says that Augustus Cæsar was able to turn Rome into an imperial state by supplying cheap corn to its starving multitudes.[2] That vilest of men and most wicked of princes, the Emperor Nero, who was a punishment to his age, had a hold on the affections of Rome by keeping granaries of corn ever ready to feed its population. In the century of our Lord, Jerusalem had suffered much from scarcities. The messianic hope became corn romances, which pictured the Messiah as standing on the shores of Joppa, the Mediterranean wafting pearls at His feet, and He distributing bread to the people, and want and toil becoming memories of the past. The only occasion when the popular enthusiasm ran so high on the side of Christ that the people would have made Him a king, was

[1] Jowett's *Plato*, "Phædo," vol. i., p. 439.
[2] *Annals*, book i. 2.

after He had fed the five thousand. There is a Gaelic proverb which says, "Hunger is a violent companion"; and its violences are determining impulses, which direct the careers of men, of tribes, of nations.

Modern history has large epochs inspired by this bread impulse. A German philosopher has wittily and pathetically said, "Luther shook all Germany to its foundations, but Francis Drake pacified it again; he gave us the potato."[1] The deeper hunger which Luther stirred demanded a higher mode of living, and the potato supplied the richer starch which the body needed to be parallel with the spirit, justified by faith. To this day the potato continues its reign. In France the dry summer of 1788 was followed by a winter below the freezing point. 1789 was a famine unmanageable by Church and State. Barley bread, soaked bran, mouldy rye, were the food of the people. On July 14th the Bastille fell, which has changed the face of Europe to this day. Had Louis XVI., like Nero, kept granaries to feed the people, Europe had never seen a Napoleon. That Revolution, the product of hunger, originated ideas of franchises which still rule Europe. "Fancy, then, some Five full grown Millions of such gaunt figures, with their haggard faces (*figures hâves*); in woollen jupes, with copper-studded leather girths, and high sabots, starting up to ask, as in forest-roarings, their washed Upper Classes, after long unreviewed centuries, virtually this question: How have ye treated us; how taught us, fed us, led us, while we toiled for you? The answer can be read in flames, on the nightly summer-sky: . . . EMPTINESS,—of pocket, of stomach, of head and of heart. Behold there is *nothing in us;* nothing but what Nature gives her wild children of the desert: Ferocity and Appetite; Strength grounded on Hunger. Did ye mark among your Rights of

[1] *Heine's Wit, Wisdom, and Pathos*, p. 289. By Snodgrass.

Man, that man was not to die of starvation, while there was bread reaped by him? It is among the Mights of Man."[1]

We are the wealthiest country in Europe. In 1847, within living memory, half a million of men perished in the Irish famine by the failure of Drake's potato and Heine's specific. Thousands died with the spade in the hand; the dying were not fed; the dead were not buried. The whole social system of Ireland depended upon the potato. Two millions emigrated to America, to give a Celtic human floor to the new world as the old world had the same, making perhaps the greatest human exodus known in modern history. It was in the struggle of the corn laws that Cobden and Bright received the ingrained conviction that we should not be a happy nation till our representative institutions were perfected, an idea which has influenced the course of politics ever since, and its issues will colour our history to the very end. During the last ten years we have heard the howl of hunger in Ireland, and seen the madness of it; and in Scotland the crofter cry for more bread and better bread is making a patient people rebellious. In thirty years famines have carried off twelve millions of people in India and cost the Government twenty millions of money.

In the forefront of the speech which Mr. Parnell delivered on receiving the great Irish testimonial to his services is his sympathy with human want, which was his power and his opportunity.

"I looked round, and saw artisans in the towns struggling for a precarious existence with a torpid trade and with everything against them. I saw also the tenant farmer trembling before the eye of the landlord, with the knowledge that in that landlord's power rested the whole future of himself and his family; that his position was literally no better, physically not so good, as the lot of the South African negro; . . . that his life was a constant struggle to keep a roof over

[1] Carlyle, *French Revolution*, vol. i., book vi., "General Overturn," p. 179.

his head and over the heads of his family, . . . I saw the Irish labourer, the lowest of the low, the slave of the slave, with not even a dry roof over his head, with the rain from heaven dropping on the couch on which he was forced to lie, dressed in rags, subsisting on the meanest food. . . . Here was a nation carrying on its life, striving for existence, striving for nationhood, under such difficulties as had never beset any other people on the face of the globe."—*Times, Dec.* 12*th*, 1883.

A Regenerator, a Redeemer, a Power, who is going to make history, must take this economic problem as an important factor in His calculations. When our Lord retired for thought, we find our Lord doing just what we should have expected Him to do: to begin His inspection of human laws and forces where man's life begins, and to adjust Himself to the external, natural, and physical life of man, as it stands related to the inner, psychic, and spiritual life. The sensuousness of man has always to be reckoned with in treating him. The sensuousness has to be respected and harmonized. Merely to live is the first prize of our being; and yet to keep ourselves alive, to keep this prize, is a grim effort all our days. The heavy price we pay for this prize is the struggle to keep ourselves living, and there is even a pleasure in the struggle; it is so central to live. We will not resign life, spite of the fierce battle. Suicide is the last insanity of our nature.

This line of thought gives a natural basis to that conference with Himself which Christ holds in the wilderness, out of which comes the tempting wish, which calls the power of divinity to its aid. The poor shall never cease out of the land. The struggle for bread is always to be there. By this economic law spiritual eminences will be obtained, nourished in the soil of want and carrying a moral chemistry from it, and the higher kingdoms will be found. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I shall verify the conclusion at which we have arrived by the equations we obtain from it to our own situation.

1. In the refusal to be a corngrower and the discoverer of a cereal of a richer potency, Christ reveals the ground-plan of our being. "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This is quoted from an ancient document. It is history that God is the basis of human nature, religion the archæan gneiss and fundamental floor, in which all the stratifications of human thought and activity are deposited. Man lives by revelations of God and commandments of God. The primitive and primary element in man is his sense of God, and his responsiveness to far off connexions, and to the tide of the infinite playing on his faculties. The mind ingredient in the protoplasm of us distances us from nature, though we are a constituent part of it; and the nature of mind is seen in its opening correspondences with God. He who would redeem man or renovate him, He who would elevate the type of him, and initiate an epoch in his history, must make this structure the stress of his central thoughts. Religion gives to man his centralness, and to give him a new direction or development you must touch the vital centralness.

This sense of God, this divineness, becomes conspicuous in the thoughts of these days. Abraham began his career in the youthful antiquity of our world by a new conception of God and a new sensitiveness to Him. The cohesion of the Hebrew nationality was got from a finer responsiveness which Moses has found and which is expressed by the name Jehovah. The epoch of modern history takes its mark from Christ. The last turn which Europe took, and on the lines of which it is still moving, was obtained through Luther and a religious revolution. Grote has said of Greece, "Grecian antiquity cannot be at all understood except in connexion with Grecian religion."[1] Gibbon has said of Rome, "The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism

[1] *History of Greece*, vol. i., p. 400. Library edition.

were closely interwoven with every circumstance of public and private life."[1] Renouf says of the ancient Egyptians, "Religion in some form or other was dominant in every relation of their lives."[2]

Religion as the uniform expression of man's deepest thought, and as a continuous factor in history, ever present, I must pronounce as the marvel of our world. We are so familiar with it, that the marvel is lost upon us. Our Lord explains the portentous phenomenon which Gibbon and Grote and Renouf have registered, by the principle that man's structure is such that he must be a Divine feeder. The nutriment indexes the nature, and the nature the nutriment. His constitution requires Divine revelations; he can live only by the natural operation of his faculties upon God, in congenialities and correspondences. There is a hunger in him which no harvest by sea or land can still. He looks upward to God. He sees God; he worships a Father; he sacrifices to Powers that rule him from above. To keep right with the august Being that invests him round is the high struggle which shows his high quality, and to inspire him in this struggle is the main business of redemption; all other things shall be added to this. Primitive man, when the world was young, saw a shell on the seashore, felt its pearly lustre and its spiral lines and flutings; perhaps putting it to his ear, he heard the roar of the sea in the imprisoned vibrations within its chambers, like the phonograph that keeps the sound that once was started in it: and he startles with a vision of the infinite Hand that carved those lines and set those colours. In the dreams which love reflected in its contest with death, the dreamer saw his lost friend in other fields and other shores, and a vision of the Otherwhere haunts him and becomes a guidance. In the purple line of the hills against the blue

[1] *Decline and Fall*, vol ii., p. 48. Bohn's edition.
[2] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 26.

sky, in the cuttlefish and in the palm tree, he sees a beauty and a majesty in which is revealed the Power which is felt in his consciousness as over him, and of relations outside of this world, of situations that begin where lands and oceans end. Homer says, "All men everywhere open wide their mouth for the gods, as the fledgling does for food." Before the Greek Attic and its cousin the Hindu Sanscrit were spoken, when that Aryan language was spoken of which Greek and Sanscrit began as dialects, a future life was sung in hymns. In the hymns of the Vedas, which Professor Max Müller has unearthed and deciphered for us, the freshness of the early dawn was the picture which pictured the boundless One, the infinite God. Before the era of Moses, in a temple in Egypt sacred to Isis stood the inscription, "I am all that was and is and shall be, nor my veil has it been withdrawn by mortals." In the 139th Psalm, which is a Hebrew lyric of man's structure, the emotion is got from the marvel that man is ever in the presence of an Invisible Spirit. "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" He is overpowered with this occult investment, and becomes lyrical, "I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." It is this historic fact and psychologic structure with which Christ meets the kindly feeling to make men comfortable in outward circumstances. It is written in an old book, and is the conclusion of history and psychology, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word of the mouth of God." It will not touch his central need to make him more comfortable. It may injure that centralness. His work must begin at another point.

In the anatomy of this temptation, in the earliest thoughts that occupy the Redeemer of men, we see laid bare the constitution of our being, its regnant forces, and

the methods of the Divine government over us. To know God, to be in response to Him, to answer His will by a corresponding conduct, this alone finds the seats and centres of us. This is the word of God, the manifestations, by which he lives. We touch our summits when we want God. We see the redemption we need when these are the summits to which we have to be raised. The religious idea is a ruling force; the religious sentiment guides and has guided the eventful career of man. To provide a finer medium for the visions of this idea, to make more forceful this sentiment, is the primal want of this world of ours. And here Christ sees the stress of His work must be laid.

2. The commandment or word which Christ receives and obeys is to restrain His benevolence and let the natural law of poverty alone and to introduce other laws. The stress or sting of the temptation is in the words, "If Thou be the Son of God"—as and since Thou art the Son of God. The consciousness of power and of a good intention is in the higher and more subtle kinds of temptation. Is it necessary to keep within the old lines, to let misery alone and to continue the former history, when other methods are at hand and history might proceed on other lines? Is it necessary that He should hold in abeyance the power He possesses and withhold Himself? Very few men can have power and waive its use. He has the power to convert stones into bread, to be the King of plenty; He has the power to redeem men from the struggle with want. But He and His work are under limitations; His divinity works by law, and His love includes law; and law restrains the freedom of love and divinity.

The work of Christ is within the old laws and the structure of human nature. It is not miraculous. He continues nature, and He carries the religions of nature with Him. He inserts no new elements into nature; the supernatural is, after all, a prolongation of the lines of the natural. Christ

is to work on the basis of nature, and the moral revolution which He is to effect will proceed on the lines of nature as it has been from the beginning. Christ is to work along with the struggle for bread, and the Bread Problem to remain where it ever was, even though the new worker be the Son of God. Man has always lived in God when he has followed the higher impulse, and not fallen back upon the animal, and Christ has come to give a fine and fresh potency to this life in God and to create a new type of it. The Christian life is not obtained by a miracle. It is the most natural thing for us. It is a higher nature to us; its germs are innate in us. Be true to your constitution, and you will develop into a Christian. The Spirit of Christ is where truth is; He leads into all truth. The Christian life is the finer life of God in us, which is our natural life.

There is a certain independence gifted to our freewill, but our freewill has to suppress and subordinate it. Mind is a miracle in the midst of matter, which is a mere mechanism. We are at liberty, and yet we are bounded; and the will finds its freedom in recognising the suppression and the limitation. The reason for our limitations is that we gain a future and more permanent good by refusing the temporary good. From our secular limitations come spiritual enlargements. Keep within the routines and traditions of your country, and then conventionalisms break up and you become original. Christ keeps within the rules of humanity, and very soon He does the most original work ever done in our world, which was foolishness to the Greek and an offence to the Jew; and He has created the highest races by the originality of the crucifixion. Begin with the creeds, and then you will not want creeds. You will leave the road of the creeds and roam over the hills and valleys of the Bible. Keep within the limitations appointed to you, and then limits dissolve away, and the Unlimited will guide you. Time is on the side

of every man who surrenders himself to law and limit, who prefers future good to immediate advantage, who postpones the showy for the solid, and waits. "If thou be so and so, do this; as thou hast so and so, go there," are siren notes, and we must rule even a legitimate power and restrain even a benevolent liberty.

There are no straight lines in nature, except in crystal forms. Look at a coast-line, at a mountain-line, at the clouds, at the rocks. The lines curve in and out, wind up and down. The curve is the line of beauty. Rules take us in straight lines, bounded on each side; and as you keep straight the rules go out of sight and you get into the curves of love. Law is lost in love; but there is a stage at which love and law are quarrelsome, and there is temptation in that stage. Limitation purchases for us the illimitable. Love is impatient with law.

3. The unmended struggle for bread is to be continued by the Founder of the new society as a spiritual agency. Christ leaves alone the struggle for bread, leaves it just where it has always been, and, as always, it will be utilized for moral purposes. We are not to be made comfortable outwardly; with the sweat of our brow and brain we are to earn our living. In this effort, in this medium, we shall hear more correct reports of the soul, and learn the more intimate decrees of Heaven. Christ refuses to mitigate the harsh conditions of being, but He will furnish lights by which we shall get more heart for the battle appointed to us. To be is a privilege; and we get the privilege of being, on the sovereign condition that we work out of the lower into the higher. There is a lower and there is a higher; and the law of ascension is that we crucify the lower; and the crucifixion of Jesus is a new leverage for this lift. If the religion of Christ had made us more easy than we were before, it would lose half its value. It rather reveals a pain deep in the heart of the universe

by His crucifixion. If a religion were introduced which brought comfort to men as one of its great factors, we should become religious for the sake of the comfort, and we should become rich, comfortable saints, which means a pauper population of religious men at best; but worse, we are likely to become a society of hypocrites, becoming Christians for the sake of the comfort. The blessing of ease is refused in this temptation to the race of men and the religion of Jesus. The blessing of rest is to be given; and rest is the equilibrium of struggling forces. Ease is the negation of force and the decomposition of structure.

The appointment is continued, unmodified, that we begin life at the point of nothing, with a bare body, and to keep life by labour; to find the living for life by signing articles of industry. Labour may pass a point and become struggle, and struggle may pass a point and become agony. Labour, struggle, agony, are the lines on which we are moving, and in this campaign there will be Sabbath armistices, when we will hear the higher word of God and get deeper insights of the mystery which encompasses us round. Being is made dear to us in both senses of the word. It is dear, and we will not part with it, and the price we pay for keeping it is dear. The young man who refuses to take the bit in his mouth and yoke to labour finds a freedom to waste himself and decompose at leisure. America and Australia are new continents made by the youth of the overcrowded old continents from compulsions of bread. We have to follow right loyally the directions which these compulsions impose upon us.

The margin is always the narrowest between bread and famine, and one of the early temptations which emerges for us all is to chafe with the difficulties, to take it easy or overstep the limitations. To hear the rumble of discontent, to be irritated with the conditions, to revolt from them; and it makes the sad breakdown of a heavy percentage

of human souls. Two temptations will emerge: to do as little as possible, or to do too much in the haste to be rich. Ambition, on the one hand, and indolence, on the other, pride or ease, will shape themselves into temptations. These temptations manfully overcome by a righteous labour will bring a sense of God, a vividness of conscience, and a vision of principles. We are potential with good, and the struggle to begin right will bring out the best. Life is a battle of alternatives; and the left-hand alternative, met by the loyalist that is in us, will summon the finer powers into government, and illuminate the fields around us, and give us our right hand. The irrigation of human nature is got through religious ideas; and we shall get them as we see the plan of God, that man lives by bread from heaven.

When life is a story of poverty or of mere competence, when we prefer labour to a counterfeit comfort, when we eat the bread of sorrow according to the will of God, then we see that the lines of this world are produced to another. We discern an essence in duty and drudgery for functions elsewhere. The junction of time and timelessness is seen, and the heat of the junction felt. The anomaly between our proud faculties and penurious surroundings grates on us, and the friction flashes on us the central, commanding, immortal structure of our being. If we had all that we want for the body, we should feel that we were spent and finished here—and there is nothing more for us. Discontent with the outward discovers the finer contents of our being. Herodotus says that the gods envy men their happiness,[1] and we now know the reason, that holiness may be emphasized as the master-idea of being. Christ leaves unmitigated this struggle for bread, leaves the law of harvests where it has ever been, and uses the scanty food-supply as an instrument for the spiritualities of His kingdom. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth"

[1] Book vii. 46.

has been accented as never before. The discourse on the heavenly bread is Christ's exposition of this temptation.

4. The special element which Christ supplies for redemptive purposes becomes visible. That element is the crucifixion. In this temptation the Cross is before Him. The bread He has to furnish is His dead body. It is divinity and death that are mingled in His great work. By divinity alone He can supply the famine of the world. He feels this power, and the feeling gives force to the temptation, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But it is divinity and death that are the true bread, which are the true need of man. This truth, accented by the temptation, is the basis of the great sacrament. "Take, eat; this is My body, broken for you. My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." In the foreground revelations of this hour is the Cross. Temptations are revelations.

When our Lord was approaching the realities of the crucifixion, and the shadow became a pain, His mind reverts to the baptism in which the shadow also was. The crucifixion is the fulfilment of it. In the baptism, the mission of death was first made vivid. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The stress of the crucifixion was felt in the visions of the water sacrament, and hence the point of the figure and the prefiguration. The temptations were holding Him from the prophetic pain, trying to soften the forecast of it by suggesting possible methods which would avoid or postpone it.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added." Christ emphasized this order for Himself and for us, that we are to begin at this beginning. We are to begin with the soul when we begin this life. When God is King of the soul, and Christ is Lord of the heart; when we are living by the best and truest in us; when we

have found the primary affections, and our feet are on the original basements of things—then we are in the kingdom of God. Every idea of happiness without holiness, every thought of success without obedience, every scheme for bettering ourselves without bettering our inward nature, is a fatuousness. And this is the beginning: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Christ furnishes for us the forces of the crucifixion, and the crucifixion is the law of the beginning. We speak in science of a magnetic field. Place a magnet on a table, and cover the table with iron filings. The filings will arrange themselves round the magnet with greater or less intenseness. The nearest will stick to it, the farther will turn sharply towards it, and the farthest will feel that there is a force near to command them. Within a certain radius they will group themselves in relation to the attractions of the magnet. The magnetic condition of the soul is got by the poles of the crucifixion; and when that is got the externals of life will be under government. Circumstance will be in rough or kindly attendance. "All other things shall be added." Christ makes bare the basement of us, by His crucifixion, when in our name He says, "Man doth not live by bread alone." Bread is circumstance after all.

5. The message to the Church from this vanquished temptation is, that her radical work is missions, not charities. She first builds churches, then schools and hospitals. She says no word about literature and science, because these are involved in the larger. Her message is religion, not civilization; grace, not culture; salvation, not charities. Civilization comes by getting that which is fairer and better than civilization. The Greeks cultivated philosophy:

ceasing to be philosophers, in the later decay, they became great merchants. The Hebrews cultivated righteousness: ceasing to be prophets, they ended by becoming great financiers. Greek and Hebrew dropped on the lower platform, through which they had unconsciously passed on their way to the higher. Phœnician traders were once the honourable of the earth; but they began with the lower, and perfected themselves in it. They found the lowermost. Their mere memory is with us, but they have left not a scrap of literature nor an inspiring character for the good of the race. The Greeks have bequeathed a philosophy, and the Hebrews the Old Testament.

The unsafe value we attach to the lower is illuminated by this temptation, and is a beacon to us. The substance of a man is the Worship in him. The deeps of our manhood are not opened till we receive and obey Divine revelations. Christ shows us the substance by His death. Take a good grasp of the governing law, that the more we make of this world the less we get out of it, that the less we make of it the more we get out of it. To know God as our Father and Christ as our Saviour, to see our home elsewhere as a fact, to be good and to find pleasure in right doing, to be holy and cultivate the beauty of character, this is got from the true bread. When we have found this true bread other and lower kinds of bread will be seen involved in it, and issue out of it. Charities, parochial organizations, school boards, parliamentary franchises, philosophies, art, will come from enthusiasms born of faith and love and worship.

W. W. PEYTON.