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1906

Temptation [String-Bound Sermons]

Earl Clement Davis

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Lemptotion, the most Eurbedded in most of the legench, and stories of minacles, which have gottand about the life of ferrer, me can alwort always find a genn of truth, or the nucleur of some fishette fort which is of importance and significance wat only as regards the Jufer understructurg of ferrer life, Int any only of imfortune and "quificonce for the light which they them ofon the the feeflexing ferblance of everyage, and every notion. I toke it that in this legend of the Semptotion, me find to at the heart of it, an expensive of ferur life, which is vot alme. feerliar to him, but enter into the life of every won, this experience, and I toke it is one of

expecial importance to us at this time, 2 wot only to us but to the entire com = unity in which we live. If I cm Jurish to glean from the tout ship the hustr of the legevel away and lay bear before you the gen that is hidden beveath, lef course the Legend closer not give us an account of any sprific event in the life of Jern, but with it collects to gether, in me and loool : izen for chawatic effect, that long struggles which prus as energetter wood, shoel to go through an he found just as every other un has to go thingh in that tremendously critical feriad of life when he fand from the doys of byhol, though young un? how and finally gone himself of to the work of his life.

the dhe incident he wo would a religions volue, unless it-firthey the experiences of a won, For one, who is sufficed to hor a sufermative firmer, to be very god him self. to go though such a ferformance, is swifty a mere at finti's seene of stoge acting. which belongs wither to that type of firs self concert, characterized by sufercition concleseusing For me enclowed with sufferrative ferrers to fair though a furen like that, with full anscion kunledge of the outcome before he entres when it, when the entrie story of its fire and withty .- It is vo special helf a consolation for to me if I have to fair over a field of huning flow shares, to some that he with he who has farred over the some field before we, had asberton feet.

Shere is on oferial heroirm or manlines involved in one who is incurine to give himself to the service of a floque striken feofle. an symfothy, and our achuiration rather restrice him who conscious of the dougen of the discore, realizing that bully that he is surceftable to its wroges, deliberating giver himself to the service of the suffering. If this legeral relates the events of a being athen this a man, as me are men, it is as ferfect a fiece of cant, and suferciliers fiety, as one confind. in the whole range of literature , -But I will not who myself of the thight and hour and live which I been to the um ferus of hogoeth for his wable, hervis afe, by trans forming live into a sufficient

the feagle, displaying his gozen away of untress, and formers, as the chamotic ficture of the worky straggles of a worky won, this stry of the templotion trucker one in the very difter of his being, but as the variation of events of a sufernature being it is a wort refubrice bit of cant, for mill see the and Phanisieism, as such Immel dove wothing to do with it. But as a writter of fact it is a fretie expension of a series of struggles which comet forme to every one of us with a force and a there cleamers, that touches at the teart of every woris life. of d may I wish to flare before you the have and which truth contained in this forage, striffed fall the lush of legeral and iniging,

But I fercine that this legend adchemet itself to to the types of temptaken mily which the feagle of this watin are heing temptel to shy, and To which they are yielding with as much give or they way and trying to cover of their meahnen, by fleachings of The influence of social feerine and the warten of System conclition, our them. They Shilosoflicoly hide themselves uncles the softism that one must adjust himself to curchiting failing to observe the fort that there is a vort distinction between adjusting over self to condition, and debusing over self before conditions. a won must out become so directified with the world on he finds it, and so continued by the world as he would love it, as to love his grifton life

and spend his time in lamenting of a the. lost world, as men home done and are still doing. On the other bouch he must vot become so satisfiel with the would as it is, as to love sight of the min of a better world towards which he unit work. Lo acfint ous= self to the world is to flot over self finnly on the flain facts of life, and resolutely and joyourly fut the hord to the flow, and never time bocks, until the last proon has been tured, and a new hainest reged, What we need to day, is not a solified beart, a a discontented gumbling ferris miti ascetec, but a wan who con fut their lovel to the flow, and the never turn bock, however worky and strungy way be the land.

The first act in this little chamate firebuction, describer for Jern wor level by the first into the milchemen and and tobel by the since Serie to commonel that there stres he worke brevel, and the refly fut into the worth of ferrer is this, Two shel wat hive by head alme. but by every word that fineecht out of the worth of gool," what is the meaning of this first act. ! Certainly one who how back to meet, and does meet this fishlen every kly in life convot fail to see what the essence of the tote scene. It is a description of a type of life, which we see about us on all sides, that type of life where: in me find men who shut theme selves from themselver all the larger and finer, and drefer things of life

by deliberately naving themselves down to the mere flysical needs and fleasures, Test alme is it the question which besets behind and hopers every youth, mail is equally the temptotion that sets behind and hefers every won in every chy of his life. The more various illustrations of this type of life are too convin to need mention, I need hardly to read to your mind the disgusting and revolting endures of such a nanon? ven of life , as is seen in the low second = ist of all claues of society, where some only aim and furfire in to satisfy his bearthy nature, by gentifying every clime derive of affetile and fairing. But me grade higher is the ferrer of a worr reprined notice, but hardly less worthless, where life is workenf

of gozing and includging in the refined strinulaters of social excitement of literangentimes, of religious intervientions But I fair firm thre disgusting trighter to a les fortunte gunf of ferfle, three who by the couch this under which they are forced to exist, are comfelled to wo he this their one arise inhips, - to eause by their days lober enough to keep them flyricolly alive, and keep the welf away furn the door of the scantily furnished home. Hoffily the conclitions are changing war, and we welcome the affirch of a time when the won who toils way also have opportunity of evelonghing the scofe of his life, and come into the richness of other things beriele bread that fiveed out of the worth of god. This first act of the chamer perents

we with a real human firblen, and it wor a real firblen to ferm of Joy areth. Jor consider the times in which he hired, and his own ferrore summelings. The little truns of Palertine mere farticlan ly ofen to the influence of that self : inclulgate survolim which was ramfant in the viental worked at the time ferm boel to fore the ferblen of the Rivel of a life he should lead. One bor but to remember the Polesticien the nature highway along which travered the great caravour of flearme suching, and tracting freight on their way from the Cast to the West, avel the west to the Eart. The Morrow love of seurovline, and lovery was carried my the an formin cive rules with every fast of the Kimm world, and the Efister of Pare orly to clearly ficture to us the

geor self inclulgence formal even amiel the little communities of saly chistoir. But beyond this, form wer the eldert son of a longe finish, the death of his fother left the bunder of suffict of his shoulder, and it way be that Semi fored that some dubions orthooks which so wany fire to day; the absolute verenity of shorthing of the interests of his life, to the one give vecenity of firiding trevel for his midned wother, and his fotherless bothers = avel sisters, That is the woblert with one can do, but many a sone hungy for other things, that he might do for the loved over, is comfelled to rest in the rotinfaction that he has dine the negative service of Reefing them from hunger and notechers, there were the real intol for fleura with

which form had to struggle, with " which forms you and I have to struggle. ferur oneverne the tenftation. We woon fais to act two, of the chamo, which center about the ferror religions conflict of the temple Jerus. He is token to the boy city, and set your the firm whe of the temple, to view the world of religious interests, "of the art the son of Arel cast thyself down, for it is mutters He stoll give his angels charge over thee; and, Chu their hands they shall bear the fert hafly the clash thy fort against a stine. " Perhop me an realize for much of a temptation this wor to forway, when we conside what kind of work his heart wer centuel on, or shin by his voble life of service. If me con thich that the story of Suche

tell of this interest in the learned dortons about & when he lingered on that menors oble misit to the temple as a boy, me find one wors she to the complicit of his life. He had been touched by the famin for the ministry, In the nietry over the temptohin to a selfish life of inchalgence, and the trimfent determination to do the work of a teacher and fight of the govel life, he had over come one temptation, only to come fare to fare with another and even gierter. When the finicle of the temple of the Holy city, he som the affortunity of the mechanism of the established religious system, hid= sling him are within its wicht, and heave a conventional friest, whom the angeli in their brock sheel bear of lest lofly he dork his fort against a store.

But ferby even then when he was collect " upon to decide as to whicher he would be a friest or a fuffet, a subservient fuffet or an indefendant peacher of the truth, the scathing surch of condemation which he uttered loter against the Relikee, Pharisees, and Hyfornites, toke him only to plainly that not for him did the ertoblished religions system offer an offertunity of teaching, and freaching the Gosfel of the Ble of Sure. For the ease, and comfort, and assurance which the established system offered him, he wor vot milling to savefice his own ferrol integrity. the any me who is at all familia with the unert, the distinbed and me much water of the religious condition to day. Throws the temptation that form fored. Every religious devonivotion in this country is bruey currel by The new iclear of worlen thright

which flothy contrachit the functormented tevets of their creech, and doctriner. Firm beneath the cloud hil of the churches, when which sits the grin nisoged michaevol ferrorage of authrity, there emerges von and then a stiffled any of for prealine, and here and there are wors for for the the sert entries to lift the liel worgh to fue himself and get a breath of fine fresh air of truth. But there is turvie beneath the lite, and the lean and look ferr of anthority who is now going through the death stuggers in his wain efforts to bold down the lid, will som feel the lofe: lernen of the took, the hel mill fly open, and that michaenoh mor? twily, a religion of anthrity, mill be buried beneath his own crumb 2

16, bling temple of creech, trinches, infiel Bitles, and Pofer. It is a thing of wo swall significance the an edition write of a current wogagine, for farophaging the worch in which the historica finale spoke of the cliquing religion of Rimon Dogramme afflies the some criticisim to me organized christianity.

Of religion as represented by the organized Christianity of today may we not slightly paraphrase Froude and say:

Religion, once the foundation of our laws and rule of personal conduct, has subsided into paganism on the one hand and hypocrisy on the other. The sophisticated in their hearts disbelieve it. Churches are still built with increasing splendor; the established forms are scrupulously observed. Public men and newspapers speak conventionally of Christianity, that they may throw on those who do not, the odium of impiety; but of genuine belief that life has a Christian meaning, there is none remaining beyond the circle of the silent, patient, unsophisticated multitude. The whole churchly atmosphere is saturated with cant -cant moral, cant political, cant religious,-an affectation of high moral and spiritual principle which has ceased to touch commercial, industrial, political and ecclesiastical conduct, and flows on in an increasing volume of insincere and unreal speech.

17. The criticism is seathing, but we les scothing criticism has been uttered within a year by ministers themselves gevaning uncles this hill of authrity and it is a criticism that will bear thinking over. I wor ferring worr alling to cly than this one of the religious world, where the derive to maintain all forms, long since onto worn, is leading men to fit new fotcher onto old gaments. avel new mine into oke mine. shins, we need to get at the meaning of this second act in the chance of Serve Lewftation, and Trhe to heart it's truth, and do as Jesus diel, Set the old form shiftfor themselves, die their waturd death, and he buried with the other devel institutions of history.

This is what ferr click, when he met 18 and one come this temptation, and tuning any firm the dead from of the fort, set himself to teaching and freaching the thingdown of Rule of For E, alme and unsuffertich by any estoblished system. In his conquest, the world wacle an efoch marking step in advance. This buch us to the third act of the chang where for is storm by the Dune all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and is told that they will be given them if he will but follow the tempter, The last act is the closing scence of a fiveess, in which the essence of the two fessions arts are brought inte the bast. Le serve the mere sensor wants of the world, to some the be a selfish quech animal, and

under the clock of the established 19. forms of an ecclesiostical system to become subservient to tradition, and authrily, that is but a form of of warhiffing the life, which in its assence is but woashiffing John Jords, Such a type of life is sof the some notice as that all too commen reef seeking, in which men fight and stringgle, and charber, with at last they came into foremin of all the wealth, all the former, all the influence that they want, but still something is locking. for they convet finel feace, and are comfelled to fut out to sea, cut off from the very wealth they have acquired. Perhop this wor a flering and wild stragle with Jerm, for he lined in the time of conquest and com:

mercial achievent. But he 20 songward, and while the wring who wony have enjoyed the fime of wealth and livery of that day Hove gove down to gunworhedgiaves of historical ablinion, the confinter Right has become the queatest woon of all history. Recause he choose to become the servont of workivel, wither the to woke worr Tivel subservient to him. Thus such the little three art Drama, in which infi are fictured the cm: questo of Jerus of Troyanth of the coursen every day temptations which you and I have to mut, either for conquest or defeat. Jesur onecome the temptations, and yet we worder why. Thur far I have singly mentioned the fort, that he chill overcure.

I vow mish to show why he one come, 21 This I toke to be the deefer meaning the uncludying wohine of the entire chama, and of derus life. Jesus felt that he bors a chief relotion: shif with the unseen God, the unseen spirit of the world. He felt that he wor a co-worker with good for the good of the world, that his duty wor goel's duty, that his work was goel's work, that his suffering wor goals suffering, that in travail and fair they lobored together for the geomethe the of brilding, the spiritor land word quickening of human beings, whitever volle influre wor within him, what even lefty ideal of service or Thought took foreirin of him, that he follimed, that he gave himself

of tr, because it waar of god, and 20, come to him with the string of goods authrity. It a believed that he wor her, wat to includge in the mue hearthy derives of his notice, wat to suffort, or defend. or first of any institution: wat to become martin and director of men or notions, but that he was here to serve man kind to de the miel of god, I thread Toon come vot to be ministered unto, but to minister." He counted it-high treasure to the cause of the won, and god, to live, the negative life of self indulgence, or institutional of blogation, fersonal agrandizement, He come and so he become servent of all ministering meter all, relying ufon this functionental truth

deef and mysticol in its meaning that won and fool are me in aim, figue, rejoicing and sours, inflasme and fain, Turn and Goel are co= workers for the ferfections of an uncompleted wold. This is the naked truth of this fortie chaway Jerus Lewflatin. That you and I are cor workers with God in the ninyard of his world, that by relying when this deep that that God suffers with us, that god rejoices with us, that gort enters into all our feelings with us, and is with in all that we do and soy by relying ufon this truth we can and will onercome the temptotions, to selfit : ven in whotever from they offer, It was this truth that work fems nichners, and in the officheusin of this truth, and the conformety

to it, be has become the aly was in 20 all history who has been true to what is forsible in you and me,

Temptation

Earl C. Davis Pittsfield, MA 1906

Embedded in most of the legends and stories of miracles which have gathered about the life of Jesus, we can almost always find a germ of truth, or the nucleus of some probable fact which is of importance, and significance, not only as regards the proper understanding of Jesus' life, but of importance and significance for the light which they throw upon the perplexing problems of every age and every nation. I take it that in this legend of the temptation, we find at the heart of it an experience of Jesus' life, which is not alone peculiar to him, but enters into the life of every man. This experience, I take it, is one of especial importance to us at this time, not only to us but to the entire community in which we live. If I can, I wish to strip the husks of the legend away and lay bare before you the gem that is hidden beneath.

Of course the legend does not give us an account of any specific event in the life of Jesus, but rather it collects together and localizes for dramatic effect that long struggle which Jesus had to go through, just as every other man has to go through, in that tremendously critical period of life when he passed from the days of boyhood through young manhood and finally gave himself up to the work of his life.

The incident has no moral or religious value, unless it portrays the experiences of a man. For one who is supposed to have a supernatural power, to be very God himself, to go through such a performance, is simply a mere scene of stage acting, which belongs rather to that type of pious selfconceit characterized by supercilious condescension. For one endowed with supernatural powers to pass through a process like that with full conscious knowledge of the final outcome before he enters into it robs the entire story of its force and vitality. It is no special help or consolation to me if I have to pass over a field of burning plowshares, to know that he who has passed over the same field before me had asbestos feet. There is no special heroism or manliness involved in one who is immune to give himself to the service of a plaque-stricken people. Our sympathy and our admiration rather rests in him who, conscious of the dangers of the disease, realizing fully that he is susceptible to its ravages, deliberately gives himself to the service of the suffering. If this legend relates the events of a being other than a man, as we are men, it is as perfect a piece of cant and supercilious piety as one can find in the whole range of literature. But I will not rob myself of the honor and love which I bear to the man, Jesus of Nazareth, for his noble, heroic life, by transforming him into a supercilious nabob strutting about like a peacock among the people, displaying his gorgeous array of virtues and powers. As the dramatic picture of the manly struggles of a manly man, this story of the temptation touches one in the very depths of his being, but as the narration of events of a supernatural being it is a most repulsive bit of cant and Phariseeism. As such I would have nothing to do with it.

But as a matter of fact it is a poetic expression of a series of struggles which comes home to every one of us with a force and a clearness that touches at the core of every man's life. If I may, I wish to place before you the bare and naked truth contained in this passage, stripped of all the husks of legend and imagery.

But I perceive that this legend addresses itself to those types of temptation by which the people of this nation are being tempted today, and to which they are yielding with as much grace as they may, and trying to cover up their weakness by pleadings of the influence of social pressure and the mastery of conditions over them. They philosophically hide themselves under the sophism that one must adjust himself to conditions, failing to observe the fact that there is a vast distinction between adjusting one's self to conditions, and debasing one's self before conditions. A man must not become so dissatisfied with the world as he finds it, and so captured by the ideal of the world as he would have it, as to lose his grip on life and spend his time in lamenting of a lost world, as men have done and are still doing. On the other hand, he must not become so satisfied with the world as it is, as to lose sight of the vision of a better world towards which he must work. To adjust one's self to the world is to plant one's self firmly on the plain facts of life, and resolutely and joyously put the hand to the plow, and never turn back until the last furrow has been turned, and a new harvest reaped. What we need today is not a satisfied beast, or a discontented grumbling pessimistic ascetic, but a man who can put their hand to the plow and never turn back, however rocky and stumpy may be the land.

The first act in this little dramatic production describes how Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and told by the Divine command that these stones be made bread, and the reply, put into the mouth of Jesus, is this, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."¹

Now what is the meaning of this first act? Certainly one who has had to meet and does not meet this problem every day in life cannot fail to see the essence of the scene. It is a description of a type of life, which we see about us on all sides, that type of life wherein we find men who shut from themselves all the larger and finer and deeper things of life by deliberately narrowing themselves down to the mere physical needs and pleasures. Not alone is it the question which besets behind and before every youth, but it is equally the temptation that sets behind and before every man in every day of his life. The various illustrations of this type of life are too common to need mention. I need hardly to recall to your mind the disgusting and revolting evidences of such a narrowness of life as is seen in the low sensualist of all classes of society, whose only aim and purpose is to satisfy beastly nature by gratifying every chance desire of appetite and passion.

But one grade higher is the person of a more refined nature, but hardly less worthless, whose life is made up of gorging and indulging in the refined stimulants of social excitement, of literary culture, of religious intoxications. But I pass from those disgusting types to a less fortunate group of people, those who by the condition

¹ Matthew 4:4.

under which they are forced to exist, are compelled to make this their one aim in life, to earn by their day's labor enough to keep them physically alive and keep the wolf away from the door of the scantily furnished home. Happily the conditions are changing now, and we welcome the approach of a time when the man who toils away also has opportunities of enlarging the scope of his life, and comes into the richness of other things besides bread that proceed out of the mouth of God.

This first act of the drama presents us with a real human problem, and it was a real problem to Jesus of Nazareth, for consider the times in which he lived, and his own personal surroundings. The little towns of Palestine were particularly open to the influence of that self-indulgent sensualism which was rampant in the oriental world at the time Jesus had to face the problem of the kind of a life he should lead. One has but to remember the Palestine was the natural highway along which traversed the great caravans of pleasure seeking, and tracking people on their way from the East to the West, and the West to the East. The Roman love of sensualism and luxury was carried by the provincial rulers into every part of the Roman world, and the Epistles of Paul only too clearly picture to us the gross selfindulgence found even amid the little communities of early Christians.

But beyond this, Jesus was the eldest son of a large family. The death of his father left the burden of support upon his shoulders, and it may be that Jesus faced that same dubious outlook which so many face today, the absolute necessity of shutting up the interests of his life, to the one given necessity of providing bread for his widowed mother, and his fatherless brothers and sisters. That is the noblest work one can do, but many a soul hungry for other things that he might do for the loved ones, is compelled to rest in the satisfaction that he has done the negative service of keeping them from hunger and nakedness. These were the real vital problems with which Jesus had to struggle, with which you and I have to struggle. Jesus overcame the temptation.

We now pass to Act Two of the drama, which centers about the personal religious conflict of Jesus. He is taken to the Holy City and set upon the pinnacle of the temple to view the world of religious interests, "If thou art the son of God cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone."²

Perhaps we can realize how much of a temptation this was to Jesus when we consider what kind of work his heart was centered on, as shown by his noble life of service. If we can think that the story which Luke tells of Jesus' interest in the learned doctors about whom he lingered on that memorable visit to the temple as a boy, we find one more clue to the conflict of his life.³ He had been touched by the passion for the ministry. In the victory over the temptation to a selfish life of indulgence, and the triumphant determination to do the work of a teacher and prophet of the good life, he had overcome one temptation only to come face-to-face with another and even greater. Upon the pinnacle of the temple of the Holy City, he saw the opportunity, the mechanism of the established religious system, bidding him come within its midst and become a conventional priest, whom the angels in their hands shall bear up, lest haply he dash his foot against a stone.

But perhaps even then when he was called upon to decide as to whether he would be a priest or a prophet, a subservient puppet or an independent preacher of the truth, those scathing words of condemnation which he uttered later against the scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites, told him only to plainly that not for him did the established religious system offer an opportunity of teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Rule of Love. For the ease and comfort and assurance which the established system offered him, he was not willing to sacrifice his own personal integrity.

Anyone who is at all familiar with the unrest, the disturbed and muddy waters of the religious conditions today, knows the temptation that Jesus faced. Every religious denomination in this country is honey-combed by

² Matthew 4:6.

³ See Luke 2:46.

the idea of modern thought which flatly contradicts the fundamental tenets of their creeds, and doctrines. From beneath the closed lid of the churches, upon which sits the grim-visaged medieval personage of authority, there emerges now and then a stifled cry for freedom, and here and there one more powerful than the rest lifts the lid enough to free himself and get a breath of the pure fresh air of truth. But there is turmoil beneath the lid, the lean and lank person of authority who is now going through the death struggles in his vain efforts to hold down the lid, will soon feel the hopelessness of the task. The lid will fly open, and that medieval monstrosity, a religion of authority, will be buried beneath his own crumbling temple of creeds, trinities, inspired Bibles, and Popes. It is a thing of no small significance that an editorial writer of a current magazine paraphrasing the words in which the historian Froude⁴ speaks of the dying religion of Roman Paganism, applies the same criticism to organized Christianity.

Here in the manuscript Earl Davis pasted in a clipping from the magazine. Transcribed:

Of religion as represented by the organized Christianity of today may we not slightly paraphrase Froude and say:

Religion, once the foundation of our laws and rule of personal conduct, has subsided into paganism on the one hand and hypocrisy on the other. The sophisticated in their hearts disbelieve it. Churches are still built with increasing splendor; the established forms are scrupulously observed. Public men and newspapers speak conventionally of Christianity, that they may throw on those who do not, the odium of impiety; but of genuine belief that life has a Christian meaning, there is none remaining beyond the circle of the silent, patient, unsophisticated multitude. The whole churchly atmosphere is saturated with cant-cant moral, cant political, cant religious-an affectation of

⁴ James Anthony Froude (1818-1894), English historian, novelist, biographer and editor of *Fraser's Magazine*.

high moral and spiritual principle which has ceased to touch commercial, industrial, political and ecclesiastical conduct, and flows on in an increasing volume of insincere and unreal speech.⁵

The criticism is scathing, but no less scathing criticism has been uttered within a year by ministers themselves groaning under this lid of authority and it is a criticism that will bear thinking over.

I know of no temptation more pressing, more alluring today than this one of the religious world, where the desire to maintain old forms, long since outworn, is leading men to put new patches onto old garments and new wine into old wineskins. We need to get at the meaning of this second act in the drama of Jesus' Temptation, and take to heart its truth, and do as Jesus did. Let the old forms sift for themselves, die their natural death, and be buried with the other dead institutions of history. This is what Jesus did when he met and overcame this temptation, and turning away from the dead forms of the past, set himself to teaching and preaching the Rule of Love, alone and unsupported by any established system.

In his conquest, the world made an epoch-marking step in advance.

This leads us to the Third Act of the drama, wherein Jesus is shown by the Devil all the Kingdom of the World, and the glory of them, and is told that they will be given to him if he will but follow the tempter.⁶ The last act is the closing scene of a process, in which the essence of the two previous acts are brought into the last. To serve the mere sensuous wants of the world, to be a selfish greedy animal, and under the cloak of the established forms of an ecclesiastical system, to become subservient to tradition and authority, that is but a form of life, which in its essence is but worshipping false Gods. Such a type of life is of the same nature as that all too common self-seeking,

⁵ Unfortunately Earl Davis does not include information about where this clipping was taken from, and I have been unable to locate it.

⁶ See Matthew 4:9.

in which men fight and struggle and clamber until at last they come into possession of all the wealth, all the power, all the influence that they want. But still something is lacking, for they cannot find peace, and are compelled to put out to sea, cut off from the very wealth they have acquired. Perhaps this was a pressing and vital struggle with Jesus, for he lived in the time of conquest and commercial achievement. But he conquered, and while the many who have enjoyed the fame of wealth and luxury of that day have gone down to unmarked graves of historical oblivion, the Carpenter Prophet has become the greatest man of all history because he choose to become the servant of mankind rather than to make mankind subservient to him.

Thus ends the little three-act drama in which are pictured the conquests of Jesus of Nazareth, of the common everyday temptations which you and I have to meet, either for conquest or defeat. Jesus overcame the temptations, and yet we wonder why.

Thus far I have simply mentioned the fact that he <u>did</u> <u>overcome</u>. I now wish to show why he overcame. This, I take to be the deeper meaning of the underlying motive of the entire drama, and of Jesus' life.

Jesus felt that he bore a direct relationship with the unseen God, the unseen spirit of the world. He felt that he was a co-worker with God for the good of the world, that his duty was God's duty, that his work was God's work, that his suffering was God's suffering, that in travail and pain they labored together for the growth, the up-building, the spiritual and moral quickening of human beings. Whatever noble impulse was within him, whatever lofty ideal of service or thought took possession of him, that he followed, that he gave himself up to, because of the voice of God, and came to him with the stamp of God's authority. He believed that he was here, not to indulge in the mere beastly desires of his nature, not to support or defend or prop up any institution; not to become master and director of men or nations, but that he was here to serve mankind, to do the will of God. "Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."7 He counted it high treason to the cause

⁷ See Matthew 20:28.

of man, and God, to live the negative life of selfindulgence, or institutional apologetics, personal aggrandizement, and so he became servant of all, ministering unto all, relying upon this fundamental truth, deep and mystical in its meaning, that man and God are one in aim, purpose, rejoicing and sorrow, in pleasure and pain. Man and God are co-workers for the perfection of an uncompleted world.

This is the naked truth of this poetic drama of Jesus' temptation. That you and I are co-workers with God in the vineyard of his world, that, by relying upon this deep truth, that God suffers with us, that God rejoices with us, that God enters into all our feelings with us, and is within all that we do and say, by relying upon this truth, we can, and will, overcome the temptations, to selfishness in whatever form they appear. It was this truth that made Jesus victorious, and in the apprehension of this truth, and the conformity to it, he has become the only man in all history who has been true to what is possible in you and me.