

From what has been said it is evident that no part of His life could have been free from it, and indeed it would appear that the assaults of the Tempter, instead of lessening, increased in violence as He approached the end of His life. Not only then was this no solitary experience of temptation, but it was not even the severest. Why then is it singled out for special record and always known as *the* temptation? The reason seems obvious enough. It is because it stands at the beginning of the life-work of the Messiah. In His quiet home at Nazareth Jesus must have had the ordinary temptations to which children and boys and youths are subject. But this was before He entered formally upon His great work. It was the time of quiet preparation for the great campaign. But now the war must begin, He must address himself to the mighty undertaking of destroying the works of the devil. And the great adversary wisely endeavors to mar it at the outset, by a deliberately planned series of assaults, directed against all the vulnerable points of that human nature which it is necessary that his great antagonist should wear. From this time onward our Lord's whole life was to be a warfare, not in one region only, not only against the rage of wicked men, but against the wiles of the unseen adversary, whose opposition was, of course, as bitter and relentless as that of his representatives in flesh and blood. From the nature of the case that part of the conflict which was waged in the spiritual sphere could not appear much in the history. It belonged to that hidden life of which even the closest disciples could see but very little. We get a glimpse of it occasionally in certain looks and words which reveal the conflict going on within, and in those frequent retirings to solitary places to pray; but of the actual soul experience we have no record, except in the case of this first pitched battle, so to call it, of the life-long conflict. It is evident that our Lord Himself must have given His disciples the information on this deeply interesting subject which enabled them to put it on record for the encouragement and comfort of His people in all time to come. Blessed be His Holy Name, for so unveiling to us the secret of His hidden life.

It is always difficult to tell the story of soul experience in such a way as to come home to the common life and heart of humanity. It will not do to tell it in the language of philosophy