

the weapon, the only weapon which our Lord chose to use on this momentous occasion, the first great crisis of His public ministry, was the weapon whose interests you and I are here this evening to magnify and to praise. I suggest therefore as the theme around which our thoughts may cluster for a few moments, "The Word of God, the Bread of Life!" And I think that our text naturally suggests two points. First of all, we have here Christ's judgment as to life—"Man shall not live by bread alone," and then we have Christ's judgment of the Word of God—"but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

First,—Let us think for a few moments of Christ's Judgment as to Life. "But he answered and said, 'it is written men shall not live by bread alone.'" What had been the effect of this long forty days and forty nights of fasting upon Jesus Christ? There was inevitable hunger to his physical frame, but the question which I now put is of much more importance than any question which centres on the body. I want that we should enquire for a few moments this evening what must have been the influence upon his spiritual nature of the long season of fasting through which he had passed. Must it not have been so that to him earth had grown more and more dim, and to Him also heaven had come nearer. Now let us remember that the temptation of appetite, and especially the appetites which range upon a lower level, is a temptation which is far less severe to him who is accustomed to abstinence than it is to him that is accustomed to indulgence. John the Baptist, the rough-garbed and self-contained anchorite of the wilderness is far safer to resist the lust of the flesh than is Herod in the voluptuous splendour of his palace. And so perhaps it may be that the forty days and forty nights of fasting had formed the very fittest preparation through which Christ could have passed, for the first onset of temptation to which he was now exposed, just as sometimes we ourselves may have found what a benefit it is to our spiritual nature—how the perspective of life gets to be adjusted, how the proportion of life in its truthfulness gets to be restored, when we turn from the crowded city and plunge into the quiet stillness and seclusion of the country, or, to use a still more familiar illustration, how we find our truer and better nature restored to us when we leave the household with its thousand little cares and come over into the sanctuary of the Lord, and worship in the place where His honour dwelleth. I say, therefore, that this forty days and forty nights in the wilderness had been the very best preparation of Christ for the temptation to which he was now exposed. And now will you notice that the first reference in this passage is undoubtedly to the Old Testament, to the words of Moses, the man of God. It was he who wrote, after the forty years of travel in the wilderness, the lesson which to our Lord Jesus Christ assumed such luminous splendour now, after the forty days and forty nights of trial and suffering and fasting there,—“Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” That was the lesson which Moses read in every blade of grass, and on all the stunted herbage with which the wilderness around Mount Horeb was so thickly planted. At the same time, we are not to limit, I think, the meaning of these words; certainly we are not to limit their application to the first reference in the book of Deuteronomy. "It is written," said Christ, "Man shall not live by bread alone," and we may very naturally enquire, where indeed is it not written? Where can you or I turn this evening where we shall not be confronted by the small still voice of God in nature insisting upon the truth that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. For example,—think of the teaching of History.

Married to the shepherd's daughter, settled as a shepherd himself, now grown to be an old and somewhat weary man, does Moses dream that he is a fixture for life, that there is for him no nobler object and aim than to guide his flocks across the pastures of Horeb? Let the vision of the burning bush and the blazing splendour of the God who is there, teach him that there is an-