GREAT ENCOUNTER

A study in the Valley of Decision
where

Jesus Christ

met

Satan

and knew

Temptation.

[1952]

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Three things mankind has craved from his religion:

A *Mystery* he cannot understand

A *Miracle* he cannot refute

An *Authority* he cannot deny

in order that he might have

a Unity he cannot resist.

Three sermons preached to the congregation

of

First Baptist Church

in

Austin, Texas

and

published by friends

Spring, 1952

I

And the tempter came and said unto Him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread . . . .

I

In all the Book nothing is more profound in meaning than the *Temptations*, the grand encounter. Like the Goodwin sands on Dover Strait, the Temptations, in simple narrative, conceal deep and hidden meanings.

For ten years I have been trying to say it—and cannot. Never knew I a deeper desire to be understood, nor have I ever striven more earnestly to come to a true answer.

But how can I understand—I can't know what being *Messiah* means!

I have been to the books—and they do not know. Imperious and impertinent is my prayer: Let me understand

Let me understand!

and be understood!

(But how can you understand . . . . for you can't know the meaning of Messiahship . . . .)

Then let me have all my human

believing mind can grasp.

And it came—

A song this heart cannot refuse to sing.

Let me at least show you that in the Great Encounter,

Jesus

and

Satan,

there are depths of mercy, and grace, and understanding that need desperately to be released over our hearts, too.

The insufferable burden of Messiahship presses down on Jesus . . . . baptismal waters yet clinging in droplets to him . . . . he goes away for a while to renew his bearings . . . . to confirm his directions . . . . the Valley of Decision . . . . He had to go . . . forty days and nights . . . .

Decision reached . . . .

comes the Tempter,

knowing certain things settled and to be settled, he grasps the mind of Messiah as Jacob was grasped at Jabbok and there ensues a battle of Spirits.

Jesus knew already that the decisions he had reached were contrary to everything nature had ever expected of its Messiahs.

Then:

> The wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence, met him in the wilderness and we are told in the Book that he "tempted" him.

Temptations to sin are frequently known in the form of desire to satisfy rightful, natural urges in wrong ways. These are "Messianic temptations" in that the urge is for Messiah to achieve Messianic results by the use of daemonic techniques.

There is nothing more profound about human nature than Satan's questions. He could have revealed nothing more true about mankind that what he declared by those three encounters, temptations in the wilderness of decision.

If there has ever been on earth a really diabolical miracle the statement of his three questions was the miracle.

If thou hadst called in solemn assembly all the wise men of the earth, rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, theologians, and poets . . . .

and had set them the task to invent three questions . . . .

three words . . . .

three human phrases . . . .

such as would express the whole future history of the world and humanity . . . .

> dost thou believe that all the wisdom of earth united could have devised anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were put to Him by the wise and mighty Spirit?

In those three phrases of the Adversary the whole subsequent history of mankind is brought together into one

whole and foretold. In them are united all the unresolved historical contradictions of human nature:

turn these stones to bread
and give mankind a mystery
he cannot understand;
cast thyself down from this temple
and *do* a miracle he cannot refute;
raise this banner of earthly unity
and create an authority he
cannot deny.

For only three things does man universally crave from religion—Give them where he can grasp them!

He wants *Mystery*—give it!
He craves *Miracle*— do it!
He seeks a girdle of *Authority* to hold him together
—recognize it!

All this Satan asked of him that dread day when Calvary became, in the wilderness, an accomplished deed in faith.

Weakened by days and nights of hunger, He, Saviour,
encountered Satan, Adversary:

Thrust

Satan speaks:

Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, and with just an empty promise of freedom . . . . freedom which men in their simplicity and natural unruliness cannot even understand . . . . which they cannot even really want . . . . freedom which they fear and dread.

Nothing has ever been more insupportable and undesirable to human society than this freedom . . . .

But:

seest thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into Bread,

and **mankind will run after thee like a flock of sheep—**
grateful and obedient—
forever trembling, lest thou withdraw
the hand and deny them free bread.

A simple thing . . . satisfy earthly hunger with
heavenly bread.
It had been done before. But there is a deeper meaning, the deepest kind of psychological meaning
so difficult of expression.
Satan was urging on Jesus—

I.

An Invincible Banner—Earthly Bread

Centuries before, the revered Moses had kept *his* flock together with earthly bread made by heaven.

In Rome the Caesars knew best of all what earthly bread, given with an Emperor's largess and larded with entertainment, would do for a restless and hungry populace.

Panems et circems,
they formulated, and it was a
formula to assuage all the
woes of the people.
Bread and the Circus
Bread and games—
a panacea. The word is
painted on airline fire-
extinguishers in South
America. *Panacea,* it
puts out fires.

And so will bread put out these restless fires and Caesars knew it.

Centuries later the followers of hungry old Karl Marx would turn the world aside with their banner of Earthly Bread, spelled out in high-sounding schoolroom lingo—
Economic Determinism—

"Grey crowds," Victor wrote to me, "grey crowds mill today in the market places of Milan."

And Tojo, Mussolini, Hitler and his myriad minions, *seeking Earthly Bread,*
room to grow it,
and the power it gives,

would threat to split the heavens asunder and spill out God in confusion before they went down to their private hell, for

Earthly Bread is an Invincible Banner.

Didst thou not know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of earth would rise up against thee and would strive with thee and overcome thee? Didst thou not know that all would follow Satan crying, "Who can measure up to this beast who brings down fire from heaven?"

Raise that Invincible Banner—

Turn thou these stones to bread—

Can your heavenly bread of freedom ever compare with the miracle of earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful, ignoble race of men,

caught in their perpetual

moral

obliquity?

Again,

Satan was urging on Jesus:

2.

The Quickest Way to Man's Conscience

Who can control your conscience easier than he who gives you all your bread?

Because Moses gave *bread* he could also write the religious law of his people.

WPA and Federal jobs bought many a vote, and will once and again and ever, if human nature is human. Not many are of the ilk of the Portugese starver who when approached for his vote by Communists drew his thin frame into line to say,

"Of my hunger I am Master."

For men will even sell the pages of their history when their little fellows are hungry.

Citizens of a great city pay due homage to their bread-giver, park-builder, street-maker, job-creator, political master and do not see any evil in him.

A year before the Nazi purge the chief of Berlin Police

tried to get Chancellor Brunning to sign a deportation permit so he could expel to Austria a rabble rouser called Adolf Hitler, but a few months passed, and promising bread, and its power and glory, Hitler took over the conscience of the German Nation of

Luther,
Kant,
Goethe,
Schilling,
Mozart,
Brahms,
Bach,
and Deissmann, Harnack, Wernle, and Schopenhauer.

The common people of Italy thought because Benito Il Duce helped in the wheat harvest and talked of bread that he was good—and he got their conscience.

How hard to call the man from whom I get my bread dishonest! No!

If he gives me bread I call him good and just and right.

Benefactor,
Saint,
Venerable,
Saviour of the people.

Give a man his bread and he asks no questions about the price you paid for wheat or where you stole it. Nothing is more certain a banner than bread.

Seest thou these stones in this parched
and barren wilderness?
Turn them into bread!

Once more,

Satan was urging on Jesus:

3.

The Most Compelling Force in Religion

Bread made up and given out of Mystery and Miracle . . . . turn these stones into bread by a miracle, and you will give mankind something he cannot understand,

Someone he cannot fathom,
to Worship.

Man seeks not so much God as he seeks the mystery. He cannot bear to comprehend his God. He cannot endure the absence of the miraculous. If you deny him the miraculous he will create his own miracles. He will worship doers of sorcery, witchcraft, and necromancy—

though a thousand times rebel, heretic and infidel, man will worship the doer of the incomprehensible wonder.

Make his bread for him by Miracle, Satan pressed, and you have

an Invincible Banner,
the conscience of mankind,
and have compelled his worship!

Give him his long-desired Bread-Maker.

Don't you know mankind will worship a *Baker* . . . .
if he *gives*
Bread,
made up of miracle?

I know, he says,

Thou didst have a hope that man, following thee, would cling to God and not ask for a miracle—but didst thou not know that when God refuses the miraculous, man refuses God?

Didst thou not know
man wants to be cowed
by what he fears and cannot
comprehend?

You speak of compassion and mercy—

Have mercy, O Christ, on bleating, lost mankind. Give him his everlasting craving!

Didst thou not know that for humble souls, worn out by grief and toil, and still more by the everlasting every dayness of their everlasting sin, both their own and that of the world, it is the greatest need and comfort to find someone or something holy to fall down before and worship?

And dost thou not know that he will worship
a miracle-maker of bread first of all?
Choose this bread made up of mystery—
You will have the Invincible Banner—
You will have his conscience and his worship—
You will have satisfied his
everlasting
craving.

Counter-Thrust

Do you think for one moment that Jesus, master of religion's appeal did not know the religious power of earthly bread, miracle made, for taking over the earth?

Even old Moses knew that and had an antidote—for did not old Moses give the answer centuries ago when he, too, said:

"Man shall not live by bread alone—
but by every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God."

Counter-thrust! The blessed answer!
Man is *more than bread!*

He is even *free*
from
bread.
There is other meat to eat!

Man is more than bread!
Man is free from bread!
Man was made free!
I will not take from him his freedom
not for mere bread.
Let these stones stay stones!

Man is free—I will not hold him to his lowest level.
Man is free—I will not deny him eternal bread with earthly.
Man is free!

Like God—and though his treasure is covered with
his own encrusting denials until he has forgotten
this treasure—still
I will not take it from him.
I will not deny his essential nature by forcing from him
the base raptures of a slave before the might that overawes
him.
And I?
I, too, am free, but I will not climb
out of this vessel of Incarnation by turning
stones to bread.
Nor will I give him magicians to worship—
he has had those,
and they left him hungrier.
Man is free—though I will take his heart. But not by *power*,
nor again by might,
but by the spirit of the Lord of Hosts.
Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall free you!
If the Son shall make you free
you shall be sure enough free!

O Blessed Counter-thrust in words old Moses knew and
could not have understood!

Nor was this temptation done—

Years later,
at a great skull like rock,
before some bars of wood,
upon which there hanged the
Incarnated God,
(lone white body hanging,
body juices spilling out agony,
shoulder sockets rent all agape,
dying mouth, eyes, heart, spirit,
tendons stretched to fly apart ,
all in religion's holy name)
Came the old temptation
crying out of the satan-ridden heart of
so-called religious men—

croaking
across years
from this Valley of Decision,
the same old
tempter,
crying,
Come down!
Come down from the Cross!
come down and turn these stones
so that we can believe!

He came not down.
He came not down.
He did not descend.
And,
had he that day of encounter turned stones to bread
in the wilderness he would have disqualified
the Son of Man
from the Cross he came to make.

Man is free!
I will not compel him now.
Nor will I from my cross.
And,
Calvary was chosen!
There in the wilderness.

Is Mankind free?
Well, not by his own desire.

Satan was humanly right. The last thing man wants is pure freedom. That he will not endure, he cannot bear it. The cross is too heavy for him.

Freedom he will not endure, for on its wings rides also detestable responsibility. Man does not want freedom, he wants a Master. That Satan has known.

He craves a Master to make his decisions for him and lacking one he creates Taboo, to tell him what he can't—
Tradition, to push him where he must—
Custom, to guide him how to react—
Fashion, to pick for him what he wears—
Authority, to believe for him what he believes—

Code or Law to determine for him how much he can—
Chivalry, to describe the One he can kiss and defend—
Heraldry, to list the names of the ones he can marry—
and
Public opinion, which he learnedly calls *Vox Populi*
and thinks it is
God's voice, *too.*
Colossal impiety!

He is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill- fated creature is born.

Didst thou forget, O Christ, that man prefers peace, and even death, to the freedom of choice between good and evil?
And instead of taking it from us
He would not let us be less than ourselves.
By refusing to turn stones to bread
He turns our freedom on its axis
and, paradoxically,
forces free-born to be free.
Instead of taking it from us,
He made our detested freedom greater.

And note that *freedom's*
awful
potential.
Free to make of himself a sewer—
Free to devise toys to blow him to hell.
Free to turn this happy earth to an inferno—
Free to deal in bottled spiders
Free to believe all sorts of divine donkeyism.
Free even to deny the reality of God Himself.
Free to crucify,
to mar, to ruin,
to mutilate, to vex,
to distort and darken.
Free to make himself a crawling,
slavering beast,

or

a giant green tree, or

a star and moon and sun, or

a saint, a father, and sovereign.

Free to become like God.

Awe-filled potential!
Why did He give it to us?
Why does He place that burden on us?
Why did He not free us of freedom?

And the answer?

He didn't,

He doesn't,

and He couldn't.

We had it already. If He couldn't hold it back from us, he couldn't give it to us.

We had it already.

Freedom is the essence of Man's distinctive nature. When Jesus said to that dread tempter in the wilderness

. . . . Man doth not live by bread alone—

he is not creating a new condition—

he, rather, recognizes an eternal nature.

To witness:

This man, born free, like God in his spirit, cannot be bound by earth chains. Belly hunger cannot always control him. Body organs cannot delimit him long. Bread cannot keep feeding him,

earth cannot hold him,

body cannot contain him,

flesh will not smother,

for he, not tied to bread,

has a Beyond-bread-destiny,

a higher appetite,

a nobler terminus,

a grander enterprise.

Man, untied by belly-pangs,
free of earth hunger,
born for God
is
made for communion with God.
And though he surrenders to flesh claims and prays,
"O God,
make me pure and chaste,
but
not yet!"
out of the same
earth bound corpse can his spirit cry—
"O Lord, Thou hast made us
for thyself, and our hearts are
restless,
till they find their rest in Thee."

Man, made beyond reach of bread-satisfaction, cannot, then, be held with the shallow coddling of a spoon-fed sop made by miracle and earthly bread.

He cannot be tolled back into communion with God as one tolls
with grains of corn,
a stray fowl,
back to her coop.
And that is his stand.

Had no one ever followed the higher hunger it must have been his stand.

Man is free!

He gives or he holds back.

Golgotha must make him want to come.

Not with any appeal to a belly-hunger shall
he be brought, following, to this Destiny.
Only on wings of a
worthy
hunger,
a heart-soul hunger.

After the Crufixion Mary and the women were free but not freed. The Master's earthly claim they knew to be relinquished by his death. Yet their heart hunger drew them inexorably to his tomb

and,

they got a glory for their soul hunger, for Mary, the Magdalene, made for communion,

used her freedom to hunger,

and clasp his knees,

crying,

Rabbon-i!

O, Master of me!

II

. . . Then the devil taketh him into the holy city,
and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and
saith unto him, "If thou art the son of God . . . .
Cast
Thyself
down!"

II

Jesus, the water of his baptism still clinging, sacred blessing words still whispering, burden of Messiahship pressing, went apart to his Valley of Decision to make certain and final choice of the Way, and,

after forty days,

then the wise and dread Spirit met him in the wilderness, and we are told,

he tempted him.

In three great scenes he tempted him to do what man demanded of Messiah.

First, turn these stones to bread and you will avail yourself of:

An invincible banner,
the quickest way to the conscience of Man,
the most certain religious appeal.

Jesus answered:

Man is free-born.
I will not buy him with the
bread of the belly-hunger.

And Satan fell back—rebuffed.

But, as usual,

Satan returned with a new proposition at once more subtle and appealing.

To Jerusalem: . . . . up Mount Moriah—into the temple . . . . up, up, up, up past all the levels, up, up, until—high on a minaret, clean mountain winds singing, pigeons fluttering away to make him room, he comes at last to the cornice,

out, out,
down,
down,
far, far,
below,

he sees the swarm of bugs,

tiny people,
far below,

climbing the hill in swarms,

to look for God

in the temple.

Satan speaks, high on the minaret;

In the wilderness, Messiah, I did an awful thing—I misjudged thee and offered an answer too easy and too cheap—too obvious, for there are many bread-makers.

But now;

thou art determined to move out into this world and demonstrate your Messiahship. Thou hast said to me, 'I will not violate man's freedom.' That is good.

Yet, without the earthly bread you might have used, how difficult for man *to choose* thee.

Canst thou not make his choice an easier one? Dost thou not owe him the easier choice for his own sake and thine?

See those thousands of seeking souls

knowst thou their lostness and waste,

their hunger and need,

canst thou feel their crippled joints

and stumbling agonies?

Dost thou not know how long their search—

how deceived and disappointed

how eager their hearts—

their hopes?

Hast thou no full heart of compassion to meet their need?

Thou hast Compassion—

I know thou hast compassion—

I see thy tears for them!

Then, on wings of thy strong Compassion—

Cast thyself out to them—

Cast thyself down to them—

Hear their faint cry?

Cast thyself down—

Go down, Messiah—

Way down to Egyp' lan'

Let my people go!

Go down to them!

In one grand,

undeniable,

compelling,

demonstration!

Hast thou faith, Messiah?

I know that thou hast faith. If thou really art Son of God, cast thyself down,

throw thyself out on His arms—

He said He would bear thee up

God, thy Father expects it of thee!

Thou hast compassion

Thou has faith—

Cast thyself down!

And in one mighty compassionate act of faith, that God said He would back up, men will be *compelled* to follow thee.

Aye, and I'll follow thee myself, if thou canst do it and not die!

No one has ever intimated that Satan, the Adversary, is a moron. Master wit he.

Satan was asking Jesus to give Mankind:

I.

A Heavenly Sign

Moses had his serpent-stick, his burning bush,
his pillar of fire and cloud, his tablets—
Father Abraham had his ram caught in the bush—
Joshua had dividing waters of Jordan and
Gideon had his fleece.
For Elijah there was rain, and angels, and earthquakes,
still small voices, and a chariot of
heavenly fire.
For even the lesser-light, Elisha, there was an axe to
float and some bears.
Give mankind the heavenly sign he craves, Messiah.
If thou dost not—
if *thou* dost not,
many will come to give the sign!
They will rob thee of thy heritage, Messiah,
for the sign is thine to give!
Cast thyself down!
If thou do it not—see many to give the sign.
Hear those marching feet,
those rattling arms?
See that cordon of sergeants surrounding that
banner? Read those magic words
In Hoc Signes
Vinces!
That is *Constantine,* Messiah. And his banner says
In this sign
Conquer!
He is marching from Mulvian bridge to rule the world,
Messiah. The bastard son of a Gothic bar maid and a
Caesar, but he knows the power of the heavenly sign.
Hear him march?
Why wilt not thou give the sign, Messiah?
Cast thyself down and save mankind
the lying banner
of Constantine.

Thou wilt not?
Didst thou never hear the sound of a million horses moving at once, Messiah?
Hearst thou the roar?
Seest thou the rape they leave behind?
They are Huns, Messiah!
That hunched over, flat nosed little man—
He is *Attilla—*
God's Whip!
See him wait for his heavenly sign—
see him raise his thin arm—
Now—
hear it?
Hear that distant roar.
Tis a million horsemen,
Messiah.
Give man the sign he wants,
Unite all around you—
spare this world, Atilla—
for dost thou not know that
already the Goths
are in
Galatia?
Thou wilt not?
Thou dost not compel?
Then see the whirling clouds of dust raised by Timour, and
the Genghis Khans—
Then hear the tortured cries of the millions damned by Crusade—
Deo Vult! Deo Vult!
God wills it!
they will cry in words of one
who claims to be your servant,
the Pope—Urban II,
and off they will scream on their way to
infinite chaotic confusion.
Thou wilt not compel?

Then will there come wars and rumors of wars, and
whence come these fightings among them except
that thou wouldst not *compel* by Miracle.
Even the pagans know the power of the heavenly sign:
See old Tecumseh with a British axe in one hand and a British astronomer's note about Halley's Comet in the other, waiting the right moment to call fire from heaven for the Creeks,
Choctaws,
Seminoles,
Cherokees,
and Chickasaws.
See the Conqueror William at Hastings with a fist full of English mud claiming God made him fall in the mud as a sign all England would be his.
If thou wilt not give the sign men will *find it*.
Find it in the tides on Norman beaches,
in the Rising Sun over Japanese rice paddies,
in the blood of bulls and boys in Mexico,
in the odor of burning witches at Salem.
Give the sign, the heavenly sign.
Thou wilt not?
Then hear again, O Christ—
Cast thyself down from this height
Compel men to surrender and
you will give mankind the
thing he cannot live
without—the one
Indispensable:

2

A God He Can See

Thou has cited Moses. Wouldst thou tell me Moses rebuked Aaron before the people for giving them a God they could see? Did Moses turn pale at the blasphemy of a God men could see? Did weak Aaron's bawling voice
'these be thy gods, O Israel'
and the

stench of the sand-cast golden calves unite to bring Moses in fury from the mountain-top?

Then let me tell thee that Moses, too, in secret, prayed for

a God

he could see.

Not even a burning bush and a voice in the mountains filled him. Hast thou not read in the Book that alone on the mountain-side Moses cried to see Him?

I beseech thee, show me thy glory!

Thou hast there all precedent!

Cast thyself down and show men their God!

For there on the mountain-side did not the One you call Father graciously hide his servant Moses in a cleft of the rock while His Glory passed by?

Thou wilt not?

Then I tell thee thou hast no choice. For if men cannot see Him they will make themselves a God to be seen.

Or worse, they will even deify themselves and worship their own parts.

Thou wilt not?

Hear the hammers, see the glow and the sparks?
God-smiths are at work making Gods.
Hear the wild cries, see the shed blood?
God-needers are at their worship.
Smell that bull-blood? They are baptizing.
Feel that deep shudder? They are eating dead bodies.
Hear those high cries? They burn little fellows,
or drown them,
or strangle them,
in holy furnaces,
and in holy rivers,
and in sacred groves.

Thou wilt not?

Then I tell thee thou are a fool! For men *will* see their Gods. They will place them on top of every hill, they will esconce them in wayside shrines, they will carve them,
cast them,
draw them,
build them,
glaze them,
paint them,
and failing in that
dream them.

I tell thee they will cover the earth with them until I, Satanos, will give order in their chaos by housing all their Gods under one roof if thou wilt not.

If not even Moses was beyond it, how canst thou expect this rabble to be above it.

Show men thy glory—the Father did!

Cast thyself down!

Thou wilt not?

Then I say thou hast no compassion.

Thou wilt not?

Then dost thou release me to make their Gods!

Aye, I will teach them well!

With snakes,
lice,
toads,
and lizards.
I will instruct them.
With trees,
hills,
beasts and birds
I will inspire them.
I will teach them well with
whips,
with goads,
with knives,
and every torture;

with fire,
and pain,
with cruelty,
and awful agonies,
I will sacrifice them.
I will meet their need.
I wil show them their God,
My God, *Me*, Satanos;

until, at last, at last—
They will know how to worship me in themselves,
in their racial pens,
in their national hutches,
in their hives of stone and steel,
their patterns of hate and war,
in their everyday jobs and luxuries,
in their money,
their sex orgies,
their vaunted civilization.
their schools and governments.
their creeds and dogmas;
they will learn to worship,
they will see their God.
and they will call *Him* good,
not knowing
He
is
Me,
Satanos!

Thou wilt not?
Then will I!
Still, thou wilt not? Wilt thou not?
Dost not thy heart tell thee I can make it a thing impossible for them to find Him?
Then will I relieve them of their dreaded
freedom and their awful responsibility.
I. Satan. will help them.

Even then the dread Spirit knew mankind demanded and would build a religion that would satisfy his craving for

mystery, miracle, and authority. Even then he could see the arising of a Super-institution of religion that would answer man's mass craving for relief from his freedom and his responsibility.

Such a power and comfort it would be, bringing all mankind's desires and appetites under one roof. Freeing him from freedom and responsibleness, it would have great strength,

great patience,

strong demands,

time to wait.

Perhaps it would even speak like this:

We have taken the sword of Caesar which he rejected. We have great patience and can wait. For mankind is a child . . . . he does not really want to be free. Though he will everywhere rebel against our priests,

and our sacraments,

and our authority,

still,

it will be with pride of school boys.

They are little children, rioting and barring out their teacher, our authority. But their child's play will end. In their foolish freedom they will cast down temples and drench the earth with blood. But after a while, tiring of their freedom they will come home to the priests, confessing with tears, to drink the cup of Mystery. (Or rather to eat the wafer, for in the latter years only the priests will drink the cup.)

In the meantime, many of their mighty ones who deny our power and authority, will grow weary waiting for Him to come, and discouraged by the extravagances, and littlenesses, and the ridiculousness of free men in religion, they will come to us for comfort.

With our *Might* and *Authority* we shall persuade them that they will become free only when they submit to us—

and remembering the horrors to which their freedom brought them, they will come to us and be content as slaves.

Freedom, free thought, and their foolish Science will lead them into such straits and face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries that some of them will destroy themselves—and others will destroy one another while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl whining to our feet,

'Yes, you are right. You alone possess
His Mystery and we come back to you.
Save us from our freedom.' '

O, the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all. Then we shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature.

We shall persuade them not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them pride in freedom.

We shall show them that they are weak, only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is sweet.

Then they will become timid, and forgetting all their foolish questions, will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen.

They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions;

trembling, impotent, fearful, quick
to shed tears, but ready to laugh when
we say its all right.

We shall allow them even sin,—they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin.

We shall tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and their punishment is on us . . . .

And we shall take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviour . . . .

And they shall have no secrets from us. The most painful secrets of their consciences—all, all, they will bring to us, and we shall have an answer for them all.

And they will be glad to believe our answer for *it will*

save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure in making a free decision for themselves . . . .

(and all will be happy, all the millions, except the hundred thousand who guard the secret)

Then, peacefully they will die; gratefully, with our blessing, they shall expire and

beyond

the

grave?

Nothing.

for they knew us—

not Him!

And have the centuries not demonstrated that it is so?

Man craves *Mystery*

Miracle

Authority.

He renounces freedom

He despises responsibility.

Satan foreknew it—Mankind has followed the pattern he saw. For in religion man will seek a heavenly sign, a God he can see, and freedom from choice.

Wilt thou not cast thyself down?

But Jesus refused Satan. Those who crave external authority follow Satan and Man and refuse Jesus.

For He had another answer:

It is written—

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

His action of refusal is as powerful as his words. Taken together they say:

God cannot be put on the spot.

Not even Sovereign Son can presume on Sovereign God.

Man must not attempt to lure God from His frame,

His path, His direction.

Do not try to change the pattern!
You can't presume on God!
God will not change His nature to meet Man's craving for the lesser. The lower craving would have made God to be Mammon.

But most clearly, the answer Jesus gave to Satan on the roof-top is the answer of refusal.
Refusal:

to compel through undeniable miracle
to deny universal law—
to step out of his human nature—
to pull his rank on lost mankind—
to make man less than he was born to be—

The Refusal says:

Man is *Sovereign*. Jesus always respected two sovereignties. God's and Man's. He never by word or act violated either one.

Man, being Sovereign, is *Able*. The individual human soul is competent and responsible. He deals with God and chooses his master for himself. All the response man needs to make takes its rise in man's God-hood. He is made in God's Image, able to respond.

Man, being able to choose,*must choose*. Respecting us less he would have required less of us than the choice. The very freedom contains the necessity of the choice, for wrapped up in the freedom is

belief,
or denial,
or eternal, wondering, doubt.

Thou didst desire man's free love that he should follow thee freely, enticed and taken captive by thee. In place of the rigid ancient law man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself—having only thy image before him as his guide.

God will not batter us into his kingdom!

To do so would destroy all that makes us worth
saving.

Listen, Satan, let Him answer thee months later from his death-cross:

That coming cross cast a shadow over everything He said or did. No answer to Satan can be complete apart from it. No word of his to the World has its meaning full apart from it.

Listen, adversary—these are dying words, and terribly,
terribly,
vital.

Thou hast inquired of my compassion, Satanos.

Here on this spread wood is my compasion,
Spattering there under my hands,
Clinging in scarlet rivers along my arms,
Congealing in dark puddles at my feet,
here is My Compassion.
Here in this gaunt carcass,
spread out for birds and jackals,
suspended to unite earth and heaven,
lifted up to all the world,
here is My Compassion.
Here in torn tendons, twisted sockets, gaping mouth,
here in these droplets of sweat, these dying cries,
here is pure Compassion.

Thou didst mention a heavenly sign, Satanos!

None knowest that craving in men's hearts better than I, Adversary. Didst thou think the sign from a roof-top enough? Thou didst know it not enough!

Then, didst thou think thou couldst
deceive me into thinking it enough?
Thou couldst not!
I could not come down
from that roof-top at thy summons
any more than I can now come down
from my Cross at thy summons

A heavenly sign?
Here is their heavenly sign!

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted . . . .
And I, if indeed I be lifted up from the earth, will go on drawing all men unto me.
When your Caesars and Kaisers are done with their signs,
When the banners of your Constantines and
Charlemangnes are dust,
When English mud is dried forever along with Norman
dreams,
When the horses of the Huns and the rumbling tanks of the Russ make the same amount of silence,
When Haley's Comet, and rings around the moon, and stars in the heavens
no longer speak their message
still,
still,
will my sign stand, Satanos.
Thou didst speak of a God man can see, Satanos!
Look at me Now!
Canst see Thy God? Thou canst not? Then art thou adversary, indeed.
For He is here!
Saying in this writhing body—
Whatever they suffer, I suffer, too—
Whatever they need, I will supply—
Singing through these vibrating strings of suspended agony
the song of *God's eternal participation in their suffering* that comes from themselves and from thee.
Calling across the chasm dug by their bitter discontent to say
By whatever rule the game is played,
by whatever law there is this agony on earth,
I, God, share it, too, according
to the same rules.
A God they can see, Satanos?
Let them see Me now,

Let them reach hither to touch,

taste,

feel,

see,

know.

Then let them choose to kneel—
And *never let them be battered to unwilling knees.*
Let their hearts kneel, Satanos—
that I make their grief

make sense!

Thou didst question my faith, Satanos.

Here is my faith—
that this cross will do it,
it will be enough . . . .

that they,
free,
responsible,
choosers,
will choose me,
here,

My faith is in them, Satan.
They will choose me by a free and uncoerced act of their independent wills.
They will choose because they are more like God than like thee!

They are Mine, Satan—
Thou shalt not have them!
now or ever!

Thou dost call me again, Satan? Thou dost call me to come down? Thou dost call me to bring the hosts of heaven?
I come not down—
For my faith is not in them alone,

Nor in this Cross—

Thou didst question my faith?

It is there, Satan,

there in the Father!

He will back me up!

This will be enough

God will Do It!

It is Finished!

It is Enough!

III

. . . 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 . . . .

III

Satan himself was trembling with anticipation as he took Jesus "alongside himself" to an exceeding high mountain and showed him—

All kingdoms of the world,
All politico-economic divisions,
All the realms of the earth,
All the powers that be,
All frames within which men obey,
All institutions that hold men together,
All the informing, controlling, subduing, motivating,
confining funnels through which Men's hopes pour.
All countries, nations, alliances, empires,
All races, tribes, and continental solidarities,
All churches, lodges, governments, and congresses,
All orders,
All categories,
All philosophies,
All professions,
and the glory of them:

All that tied them together
All that made them one—united
All their kinships and commonalities
All their ties of race, creed, color, and line
All their potentials and common destinies
All their prejudices and their common hatreds
All their inheritances and their resources
All their subject millions in people and wealth
All their fertility,
reproductiveness,
magnificence,
extent—

All these
I
will go on giving
Thee!

They glitter and writhe before him,
sparkling and twisting,
bound in their sheen, tinsel, and
stark captivity.
All the uniting principles of earth
in one mighty act—
delivered
by the One who owned them
to the One who came to free them!

All these I will give thee
If thou wilt
once for all bend the knee
kiss the hand
and give me what God gets!

Satanic wit!
O devilish skill!
Daemonic cleverness!
Make a shift in Gods!
Of all his evil skill this is his last and mightiest thrust.
This, the most tempting, this, the most subtle, this, the most critical, this, the most doomed to failure,
but this the greatest boon he could have offered.
After this, Satan had no gift to give, no power left to offer—
this was his mightiest,
best,
and last!
If this is refused, Satan is done.

It has a deeper meaning than we have ever dreamed. Its hidden meaning is no surface thing. One searches, delves, mines, and tunnels to get to it. So much there is to twist the search for the meaning. Then one day it bursts on the seeking heart:

Satan did not offer him *Power*.
Satan did not offer him more *Authority*.
Satan did not offer Messiah *Empire*.

We have been diverted when we say that Satan offered *Power*.

That Satan knew he had

We miss it if we say that Satan offered *earthly dominion.*
We miss it if we say his offer was *accomplished control.*
We miss it if we say he offered Him *glory.*
We miss it if we say the gift was *Kingship.*
We miss when we say even *Authority.*
We miss if we call it even *honor and Empire.*
We miss with any *earthly Pomp.*
No! The meaning lies far, far below these levels.
Satan had more sense—he would not have tried to buy
even a Man, much less a God, with the chipped
marbles from a schoolboy's collection.
No! He offered far more!
The one thing mankind most wants
His heart's desire above all others
The thing he expects of all religions
The thing he demands
seeks to buy
aches to own
The One great boon
Man wants
with all his soul.
More:
He offered the One thing God wants too.
The desire of God that made the Incarnation
The great wish from God that would suffer the
absent son.
The great agony of God's heart that is
greater than the Cross
of His Son.
O, Satan knew!
He could feel Man's one desire—
He had sensed Gods' craving heart—
So:
There on the mountain-top
Satan
offered
Incarnate Son

The
One
Thing
Both
God and Man
had
eternally
desired.

He offered
Unity!
Oneness!
Unitedness!
Community!

All the *conquerors*
Timours and Genghis Khans
Charlemagnes and Caesars
Hannibals and Napoleons
riding in their clouds of dust that reach to the moon—
with their swirling hordes of saber-trusting demons—
thrust up on earth's beaches by tides of conquest—
All have sought only to *unite* Mankind.

All the *political philosophies*
Naziisms and communisms,
socialistic fascisms,
internationalisms and alliances—
All have sought only to
combine
us.

All the great *super-churches*
All who claimed to know God's desire
Romanisms and Parseeisms
Hinduisms and Pantheisms
All missionary enterprises
economic and cultural
or
spiritual and personal

All ecumenical movements
All imperialisms and
hemispheric
solidarities
All,
All,
have sought to make All *One*.

All the towers of Babel—
from the first in Babylon
to the current one in New York
All have sought to make
Men
Unite.

Thou dost know!
Satan said to him that dread day—
Even God thy Father wants his children *One*.
All mankind has desired it!
Save mankind his agony of striving
for
Community.
Meet his universal craving.
Unite him in one Ultra-grand,
Unanimous,
Harmonious
Ant-heap!
Give him a centerpole to surround
Give him a God he can see
Give Mankind someone to guard
his conscience here on earth!
Take this cup and in it mingle the
bloodstreams of all the earth into
one grand family of earth-bound
Men.

Give at once all man seeks on earth!
Do it!
Put all political, economic, personal, and
spiritual loyalties of mankind into one bag—
and thus—

give both God and Man
their
long
desire!

Across two thousand years Satan still wonders at the wildly exultant refusal Jesus gave his Mightiest and most subtle temptation.

HUPAGE SATANA!

Go Under! Adversary! and

it *is* a wild,
exulting
cry.

Get behind, Evil One! and

it *is* an
exuberant
rejoicing.

Lead yourself away, Satan—I have now received your most vicious blow and it does not hurt.
Go down, Demon-Prince—there is no worst you can do!
Stand aside, Beelzebub—now I will have the dominion.
The battle that won the war was here.

This was Verdun, rather than Gethsemane.
This is where the Marshal of our Souls cried
What Marshal Henri Phillipe Petain cried at
Verdun to the German Crown Prince—
"Thou shalt not pass!"

Be gone, Devil!
The prince of this world cometh and
hath nothing in me.

Give up, Lucifer, fallen
Star
of the Morning.
My Kingdom is not of this world else
would my servants fight.

Across two thousand years Satan still wonders where he failed. What had he done to produce that reverberating victory cry.

What did he not say?
Why, why did it fail?

Across the centuries he mutters in imagined interview with Messiah:

Why, he asks querulously, didst thou really reject with such scorn that last gift I offered thee in the wilderness?

There have been so many since thou didst refuse to take the sword of Caesar.

There have been so many to claim Rome, Jerusalem, and the empires of the earth.

So many have fought for Caesar's sword.

Why didst thou so scornfully refuse it?

These four times I offered it to thee:

There on the mountain-top I offered the banner of earthly unity!

Once, on Galilee, after you fed the five thousand, I offered it to thee again!

As you rode into Jerusalem, thou couldst have had it then!

And before Pilate—why did not thy servants fight?

Why didst thou reject my last mighty counsel?

Why dost thou refuse so finally all of Caesar's swords?

Hadst thou accepted that last counsel of my mighty spirit thou wouldst have accomplished at one stroke all that man wants on earth:

someone to worship he can see

someone to keep his conscience

someone to combine him into

one
harmonious
Ant-heap.

Why didst thou refuse?

None since thee hath had strength to do it.

Look at lost, struggling, divided, aching Man—
standing in pools of blood
amid piles of wasted dead
starvelings with unused bread
all around them . . . .
split and atomistic
wailing for One great leader
following idealistic geese
on long crusade.

Why that foolish cross and not this crown?
Why didst thou *do* it!
So Satan eternally wonders—
and we wonder too!
Why did He not give us that Oneness of frame we have craved?
Why are the peoples of earth split into myriad petty sections?
Why cannot all mankind worship its God together?
What possible heavenly reason can there be for earthly confusion?
What can heaven want with three hundred Protestant sects in America alone?
Why should Christianity not marshal her forces in just two camps,
the Protestant, and
the Catholic?
Why should the separateness of communities and nationalities keep this world in a thousand camps, *apartheid?*
We, too, ask Satan's question.
Where did he fail?
But Jesus saw it! A deeper
deeper
meaning—
O Incarnated Wisdom!

For the deepest meaning of Satan's offer—
the deepest significance of the cry for Unity
has not even been mentioned—

but Jesus saw it!

The deepest possible meaning of Satan's offer cut precisely across what the Incarnated Son had come to give.

Far deeper than unity—
Satan offered
At-one-ment

and that is
not
Satan's
business!

He offered Atonement!
a crossless,
bloodless,
giftless,
deathless,
Atonement.

He was offering another way!

He was offering to be God!

He proposed what he had lost heaven for
proposing before!

A change
in
administration.

He wanted to be God!

What Satan asked Jesus to do would have bound us all to *earth forever,* for that is the inevitable consequence of the choice of lesser gods.

Christ could not have accepted earth's kingdom without making earth the end of everything .

To have chosen earthly unity would have emptied heaven of meaning.

Would have made these Sodoms to be Jerusalem—

Would have made the Cross an impossibility—

Would have limited Mankind to these swamplands.

For earthly unity is always a matter *power,* and *power always corrupts* when it is of earth.

Jesus' grand rejection took into account Mankind's universal failing:

he always looks at the outward,
his emphasis is unfailingly external.

He always perverts the spiritual to the service of the fleshly.
He will ever reverence the robe or the cup above its contents.
He inevitably respects the law above the person.
His *systems* always
absorb
his *spirit!*
The frame becomes more vital than the picture.
The way of doing is more precious than the deed.
He smothers his vital faith in the ritual born to express it.
He makes a meaningless patter out of meaningful liturgy.
He sings his hymns without reading the words.
He makes superstitious habit out of worthy reverence.
He will fight for the cup after its contents are spilled.
He chatters in the presence of deity and forgets to bow to destiny.
He quails before institutional requirements and treads on eternal spirit.
He recites his creed but wonders what "Catholic" means as he does it.

He *always*
reveres
the lower.
And Jesus knew it.

The lower nature of man has attempted to build a tower of Babel around every principle Jesus held.

He, Jesus, would break the enclosing cup,
but man wails over the lost cup.

Jesus recognized that Man's perverseness would over-value the value-less-ness of the instituional frames an earthly unity would require.

Jesus' grand rejection recognizes that the only eternal unity is of the spirit.

He did not dare put it within our fleshly reach,
for the power that goes with Unity always corrupts.
Flesh-bound Christians always seek a walled-city.
Jesus' answer gave us no stone for the building of such a city. While He lived on earth there was no sign of a Church made so by *organization.*

It was a

Brotherhood —

of faith-exercising
men
who had received a revelation from God about the meaning of Jesus for their lives.

No political plans,
no rules,
are called for.

Love is everything
Fatherhood is central.
Brotherhood a universal concomitant.
Freedom of Spirit
and
Unity of Body
are at opposite ends.

To erect a colossal supra-state religion is the most destructive force imaginable to *free,*
responsible,
Spirit.

For institutions are based on power, the power made up of the sum-total of the individual powers *given over*:
Power ever corrupts,
and the unity of institutions
is a corrupt
unity—
and Mankind will follow it
to a beastliness.

The answer to Satan did not, however, refuse a true unity. For the Master had the deepest unity of Atonement in His mind:

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God
and Him only
shalt thou serve.

He never intended his church to be smothered under the walls and roof-tops of earth-bound externalism:

but *neither did he intend the rejection of such walls to make us*
unbrotherly and boorish, selfishly provincial, in an unchristian isolation.

We face the problem all communions of Christ on earth face. The kingdom is of the Spirit. The Church is not stones and wood. The denomination is not the Kingdom.
I would spend my ministry to see:
Our mastery of our own institutions in a triumph of
the Spirit; to see
us forget we are "Southern"; to see
us lose our provincialism without succumbing to
a larger provincialism that would split
Christendom into just *two* camps.
(*The one thing that has saved us untold spiritual agony is that Protestantism has never been organized into one camp for battle.*)
(Can even God have pity on us when
Christendom is just two armies)

Protestant *versus* Catholic.
(Better three hundred camps, better a thousand squads, than two mighty opposing armies. Better all churches "local" if there would be still no
full
Oneness.)

I would spend my ministry to see us
achieve a world-view without losing a
Christ-view;

to see us
serve all men without forgetting we serve Him;
to see us,
sit down as friend with friend by any man
without feeling for the barrier.
I would give my ministry to see:
world-Christians forsake their idols, and achieve a sense
of history that sees what happens to *All* earthly
kingdoms,
movements,
enterprises,
empires,
denominations.
To see us come to know
that His Unity is ever of the Spirit.
For He has a Unity
and of that we are a part. Freely and
independently of that we are a part.
The Church cannot limit herself to earth and be true to Him.
She tried it once and lost *Him*.

Once upon a time, long, long, ago, the little maiden Church was an *unwanted child in the chimney-corner of Empire*, but the years passed and she grew up to become *maid-of-all-work for earthly empire*.

Time passed, and her station improved. She went upstairs out of Empire's kitchen to be a *chamber-maid for Emperors*.

Then a *hostess*, and
then an *heiress-apparent*, and
then *queen-regent!*
In all her splendor.
But then,
the unbelievable!
Something began to
cause a *blight* among Emperors.
They didn't last long or bloom well anymore.
They took down their sign,
held a fire-sale,
and went out of business.

Pushed out by the rising, young tide of new competition
from the firm of Free-doom, and her partners: Right of the
Individual,
Spiritual Independence!

and the glamorous *queen*
became
a
fussy old dowager,
disinherited,
in her walled city.

He wants no more of that!

His Kingdom is of the Spirit.

His brotherhood is of the Spirit.

All this He said to Satan
and to the Galilean peasants
who wanted him to be king;
and to Scribes and Pharisees in their walled city;
and to Pilate on his judgment seat of Empire;
and to Herod that old fox, out-foxed,
and to Chief Priests and Rulers, Popes and Potentates,
Councils, Governments,
and denominational hierarchies.

And to Ephesus, he said it, before the Goths came to make the city a heap—

Hast thou not left thy first high love?

First love is
First Lord.

His Kingdom is of the Spirit.

There is no other.

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