



*The Saviour of the World*

Volume 4

# THE BREAD OF LIFE

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Charlotte Mason

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Book 4

## *The Bread of Life*

*by*

CHARLOTTE M. MASON





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*The Last Supper*

LEONARDO DA VINCI

# *Introductory Note*

*By the Rev. WM. H. DRAPER, M.A.,  
Rector of Adel*

IN times of intellectual stress and change, when the progress of knowledge and criticism compels every thoughtful reader to see old truths from new points of view, there are some people to whom the point of view of Poetry seems to afford a prospect not otherwise obtainable, and therefore that it is worth taking up, at least tentatively, in spite of the difficulty of making the foothold secure.

The reason for so considering the point of view of Poetry is that it stands clear of the dust of controversy. Those who look from it know that they cannot see detail, cannot make out exact definitions, but can see form, the outline of which is softened by distance; and mass, the colour of which is enriched and toned by intervening space and air.

What is the relative value of this point of view, on the subject here treated, cannot yet be finally determined. But no vindication is needed of the wisdom of the idea that it is worth trying. To employ it is like the action of stepping a little further from a picture when our present position seems to show something too hard or disproportioned in the outlines or too strong in the light. One might even say more than this and affirm that the use of poetry is the use of a different light, namely, that of imagination; demanding rare skill in its gradations, but, when handled according to knowledge, promising new perceptions.

The writer of this little volume, part of a more extended

work which aims at giving some new perceptions over the field covered by the Evangelists' records, has adopted the medium of verse as the best way of explaining at once what her aim is. She is deeply aware of what may be said against such an attempt. She knows that the mere use of verse at all is taken by some as a kind of challenge. But when so taken it is, so far as she is concerned, mistaken. Verse is here chosen because it is the accepted instrument of poetry, and what is here said in verse is said from the Art's point of view. But her chief object has been not to make a poem but to illuminate a theme which is itself to her more than poetry and includes it because it is the Truth of all truths and the Life of all lives.

When familiarity with the letter of Scripture has thrown a kind of veil over the eyes, when critical and theological controversies have raised a dry dust round the Figures and scenes portrayed, -in such a time come the opportunity for poetry to describe what it sees in freshness of spiritual perception and in gazing back on the Past without controversy and from a heart at peace.

Whether the hand which holds the pen may sometimes tremble or no, and whether or not the skill of the artist be at times imperfect, yet, if the spirit of the art is there, it will awake in others those same new perceptions, a consciousness of which first moved the writer to take up the pen and then to go on with so great an endeavour, in which to fail is easy and to succeed is hard.

W.H.D.



## *Author's Note*

I SHOULD like to acknowledge very gratefully my indebtedness to the Rev. W. H. Draper, not only for the exceptional insight his "Introductory Note" manifests, but for very valuable and sympathetic criticism on some part (Book I.) of the MSS. of this work. Any who have had the pleasure of hearing his Oxford University Extension Lectures on the Divina Commedia will be able to judge how competent a critic of poetry Mr. Draper is, and also how well-read a theologian.



## CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

### THE HOLY INFANCY

*ANGELS and prophets long had searched in vain  
Those mysteries, now, for wayfarers writ plain:*

*How Christ was born in Bethlehem of pure Maid,  
How to three kings His Rising was displayed:*

*How holy Simeon blessed Him and foretold  
His Mother's grief, He, sacrificed and sold.*

*How out of Egypt did God call His Son  
That all the prophets figured might be done.*

*How, simple Child, He dwelt in Galilee  
That simple folk His light might daily see.*

*How to Jerusalem in His twelfth year  
He went, before Jehovah to appear:*

*How there He shed His light, a duteous Boy,  
To keep the law His errand, not destroy.*

*How eighteen years of meek submission then  
Prepared Him for His labours amongst men.*

*How He went out to John to be baptised,  
And John in Him a greater recognised.*

*How in the wilderness for Forty Days  
He bare assaults of Satan. Give we praise!*

*How in Caná He made the water wine,  
That men should see of life in Him a sign.*

*How in Jerusalem quick drave He forth  
The traders and their wares—of how small worth!*

*How journeying north to Galilee once more,  
He sate and taught that Woman of heavenly lore.*

*How all the men came out who heard His fame,  
And, SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, did Him  
proclaim.*

*These things have we considered as we might,  
And hence would meekly follow in His light.*

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

### HIS DOMINION

*CHRIST healed the rich man's son: the man believed;  
"God is a spirit," the lesson he received.*

*He preaches to His own; mad hate they bring,—  
Would from steep brow of hill the Saviour fling!*

*People who sat in darkness saw great light  
Whose brightness baffled unaccustomed sight:*

*Those fishers four on Sea of Galilee  
The fishers of the Lord were called to be:*

*At Capernaum Christ preached: the people heard,  
And knew Authority was in His word.*

*Vile spirits bade He forth in that same hour,  
And all men recognised an unknown Power.*

*Peter's wife's mother, raised from fevered bed—  
By hand that raised her would thenceforth be led.*

*“At even ere the sun was set,” they came  
To Him for healing, sick and blind and lame.*

*Then wearied, He, a great while before day,  
Went out to desert place that He might pray.*

*The folk of Galilee would make Him King;  
He knows how little worth the praise they bring.*

*Weary with preaching, Christ bade put to sea;  
Behold, a wondrous draught, the fishers’ fee!*

*A leper cried, Thou canst,—wilt make me clean?  
I will, saith Christ; healed, who had leprous been!*

*Levi took customs’ dues by the seaside,  
And when the Master called, he straight replied.*

*His Jews rejected for hypocrisy;  
Too skilled in subterfuge, what hope have we?*

*Man at Bethesda’s pool so long had lain—  
The Lord who healed him to betray was fain!*

*Christ taught,—the Father and the Son were One  
In words They spake, in all works They had done.*

*On the Son the royal crown of judgement set;—  
He learned the ways of men, nor would forget;*

*In Him was Life; and all the souls that live  
Draw breath from Him, to Him their praises give.*

*The Law, the prophets, witness; to each heart,  
The Father testifies, and shows his part.*

*Thy Jews condemned, grant us, good Lord, to heed—  
Unstable in our faith, slack in our deed!*

*Christ walked in cornfield on the Sabbath day,  
And set men free from bondage whilst they pray.*

*He instantly the withered hand restores,  
And, grieved, the Rulers' faithlessness deplores.*

*Once more to fair Genesareth He came,  
And multitudes drew nigh, with love aflame.*

*Our Founder chose the Twelve, and laid them, sure  
Stones to sustain that Church which shall endure.*

*He charged them; told them, how the poor are blest;  
How persecutions should their lives molest:*

*Taught them the brother-secret; how to give;  
How with all men as brothers they should live.*

*On blind man led by blind man, cupboard's store,  
Of building House of Faith, He told them more:*

*And then He climbed the Mount that all might hear,—  
That multitude had come from far and near:*

*“Blessed are they that mourn,” He told the sad;—  
With promise of the Father’s care made glad.*

*Chaste must they be and kind and guard their speech;—  
For God’s own holiness is in man’s reach.*

*He taught men how to give their alms, to pray;  
And all their anxious fears to put away.*

*Behold, the Church He founded on that day  
Received those Institutes should guide her Way.*

*The people heard, and hardly understood,  
But knew the Word He spake was very good;*

*Perceived Authority in every word  
And fain would bear due fruit of that they’d heard.*



## CONTENTS OF VOLUME III

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

*THE centurion, begging that the Lord would heal  
His suffering servant, did great faith reveal.*

*Behold, with joy return the mourning train  
Come forth to bury that young man of Nain.*

*The prisoner, John, makes question by his friends;  
News of His works, the answer Jesus sends.*

*“What went ye to the wilderness to see?”  
Cried Jesus, praising John’s fidelity.*

*A woman anoints His feet with costly nard;  
Christians shall know thy deed—her great reward.*

*He walks in Galilee, and women tend,  
And gladly of their substance on Him spend.*

*The sower sowed in various kinds of ground;  
The Lord to hearts of men a likeness found.*

*Who knows the things of God and doth not tell,  
Like him who hides a lamp, doth not do well.*

*Together are let grow the wheat and tares,  
Till each kind to its place the reaper bears.*

*Thou think'st to watch the growing of the seed?  
A secret, that,—so by God's will decreed.*

*A grain of mustard-seed, so small to see,  
May yet become a mighty sheltering tree.*

*Thou'st found a treasure? Go and sell thine all,  
Ere thou this treasure all thine own may'st call.*

*The woman hid the leaven in her flour;  
The Word hid in a heart shall rise with power.*

*A merchant came upon a pearl of price  
And forthwith bought—by liberal device.*

*And, "Have ye understood?" the Saviour cried;  
"Yea, Lord," they said, but in their lives denied.*

*"Thy mother and Thy brethren would Thee see;"  
"These be My kinsfolk—they follow Me."*

*Proud Nazareth rejected Him who came  
To save the humble: Do not we the same?*

*Jesus came walking o'er the stormy sea;  
His friends, relieved, were there—where they would be.*

*The demoniac raged as fierce as angry storm;  
Christ spake,—and meek he sat who'd wrought such  
harm.*

*The little maid was raised by Jesus' hand:  
“Now, see ye no man tell,” the Lord's command.*

*A woman crept behind and healing took;  
Christ made her happy by a pitying look.*

*Two blind men came and cried on Him for sight:  
The Lord restored to these the joys of light.*

*A dumb deaf man sat moody by the way;—  
Christ taught dumb lips to praise His name that day.*

*The time had come to send the Twelve abroad,—  
Bless'd messengers to carry forth the Word.*

*As father charges son would cross the seas,  
So Christ, their Father, gave His charge to these.*

*“Dangers I see await you on your way;—  
Be prudent, friends, and bide a better day.*

*But have no fear; knows not your Father all  
Of good or ill His children shall befall?*

*Yet ye must bear the cross, nor shrink in shame  
From any obloquy or any blame.*

*Of this be sure, whoever you befriends,  
Your Father in heaven will make that man amends.”*

*Forth fared the Twelve in pairs to do His will,  
And as they went, the Lord was with them still.*

*With joy these men returned to show their Lord  
How it had prospered with the seed, His Word.*

*Now, John the Baptist prisoned in strong tower  
To chide the king had used a prophet's power:*

*The king sware foolish oath to grant what boon  
The princess asked of him; vindictive, soon—*

*“Give me John Baptist's head,” she cried; and, lo,  
The sorry king bade armed men to go*

*And bring the prophet's head. The news was brought  
To John's disciples; quick they Jesus sought*

*And told their grief to Him. “Come ye apart,”  
Saith Christ to the weary Twelve; with tender heart*

*They follow Him and tell what things befel  
In all the cities—whether ill or well*

BOOK I

*The Bread of Life*



# I

## *In a desert place*

“COME ye apart to a desert place and rest,”  
Saith Christ to His Chosen Twelve, returned to Him  
From wanderings, healings, teachings, manifold.  
But, see, the people will not be outdone,  
Nor let their Lord, theirs also, out of sight!  
They watched Him enter the boat with those, His  
friends;  
Tumultuous, eager, followed they on foot  
Round the head of the lake, heedless of noon-day  
heat;  
Crowds gathered to them from the cities round,  
And, lo, that desert place the Lord had sought—  
Spot lovely and remembered, was't, perhaps,  
For many a prayerful vigil, solitary,—  
The crowd, iconoclast, had broke the spell,  
Shattered that image of sweet solitude  
Which refreshed the Master's thought! See,  
multitudes  
Are there before Him, waiting for His words.

Men of sweet nature, sure, might feel annoy  
At such rude trespass on hour set apart  
For rest and converse with their chosen friends:  
They of sweet nature, aye, but not the Christ:  
Tender, He welcomed all these scattered sheep  
Having no shepherd; diligently taught  
Through all the long day things that concerned their  
peace—

Things of the Kingdom which was for each of them:  
They heard with greedy ear: all learned that day,  
That, whoso comes to Christ comes always well;  
Never intrudes on secret communings,  
Hears words for other ears, presumes on hours  
Devoted to great matters; all's for him,  
Poor wretch who has no claim!



## II

### *“Jesus went up into the mountain”*

HE climbed the slope in sight of all the folk;  
They watched, nor looked away, and knew at heart,  
Unknowing that they knew, that in Him alone  
Was all their hope, their life; without Him nought!  
He sat with His disciples there; He spake  
Of the Kingdom of God and how men enter in:  
Of what, we know not save by gathering up  
Words elsewhere He had uttered, other time;  
By conceiving baffling thought of parables  
And sayings precious, unregarded pearls,  
That no man gathered for our after-use!

The time wore on; for many hours the folk,  
A moved and swaying throng, gave heed to words  
That Christ let fall among them. The day far spent,  
The Disciples came to Him, urged common sense;  
(Nay, sure, in this thing, they more wise than He!  
So the crowd scores o’er poets and the rest,  
Who top them by head and shoulders; they have  
sense!)

Sententious spake they, in dull human wise;