

It is not an easy time to begin your ministry. Yet, as you know, the gospel came to a cruel world, and nothing that men can do need rob us of our faith in God. This is not the time to wish men happiness. But I hope that you will have the satisfaction of bringing to the men and women you serve a confid-

ence in God which nothing can destroy. And may this war soon so end that we all alike may be able to strive once more for lasting peace.

I am, my dear X,

Your old teacher,

Y.

## Contributions and Comments.

### *Noli Me Tangere.*

ST. JEROME'S translation of the words in the Fourth Gospel has been responsible, it would appear, for our English versions and in consequence, I venture to suggest, for a misunderstanding of our Lord's words.<sup>1</sup> In the N.T. *ἄπτομαι* constantly occurs in a sense almost interchangeable with that of *κρατεῖν*.<sup>2</sup> Allowing then for the exact significance of the present imperative in place of an aorist subjunctive, the meaning should be, 'Do not continue to keep hold of Me,' or 'do not seek to lay hold' or 'to cling to Me.' The following sentence then becomes clear. The Lord has not yet left the earth; He will be with His disciples for some time yet, so that Mary Magdalene need not fear that He will

<sup>1</sup> It is fair to say that *tangere* often means more than *touch*, *θιγγάνειν ψηλαφᾶν*. Thus *tetigit terram* is 'he reached, or made the shore.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mt 8<sup>16</sup> *ἤψατο* and Mk 1<sup>31</sup> *ἐκράτησεν*.

disappear, if she loses hold of Him. The time has not yet come for His ascension. It may be added that this appearance of our Lord to Mary Magdalene is to be identified with that to her and a companion recorded in the First Gospel. There it is said that the women clung to the Lord's feet, which is consistent with the Fourth Gospel's *μή μου ἄπτου* derived, we may suppose, from Mary Magdalene's individual story.<sup>3</sup>

T. NICKLIN.

*Ringwood, Hants.*

<sup>3</sup> Westcott, as the Very Rev. R. O. P. Taylor has noted for me, mentions that a few copies here add that they started up and ran to Christ—perhaps to clasp His feet. This supports our identification of the appearance described by St. John with that described by St. Matthew. We shall understand the present *ἀναβάνω* not as Westcott of a gradual ascension through the forty days, but as 'I am going to ascend,' in the same way that it occurs in 7<sup>13</sup>.

## Entre Nous.

### 'I Will Not Abandon You.'

How thrilled we all were some days ago when the news of the epic exploit of His Majesty's men of the Navy, Merchant Navy, Army, and Air Force, in the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Flanders, came through! As we pictured the men fighting their hazardous, precarious way to the coast at Dunkirk, fighting gallantly against terrific odds, how deeply stirred and moved we were!

I am sure one thought would have been in the minds of many of these brave lads, a thought that would have fortified and nerved them in their last desperate bid for the coast, expressed for us in one of the B.B.C. announcements, 'They knew that when they had fought their way to the coast the

Royal Navy would be there ready, waiting for them.' The certain knowledge that the Navy would be there to take them back in safety to England gave them that desperate courage which enabled them to see the bitter business through to the end.

As I listened to the news that night, my thoughts travelled back to a house in Orkney, where I had seen a painting by the artist Thomas Somerscales. It was a picture on a fairly large canvas. The sky was black, scowling, squally. About the centre of the picture there was a three-masted sailing-ship. The 'royals' were clewed up, the 'topgallants' were being furled, the crew were shortening sail, the captain was bringing his ship to windward.

In the right-hand corner of the canvas there was a tiny tub of a boat, bobbing and tossing like a cork in the heavy seas. In it there were three ragged, tattered figures. Two were pulling at the oars, while one was standing up in the boat waving frantically.

Looking again towards the ship I observed that a signal had been run up the mid-mast, three flags. I asked my host to read the signal for me, and he said, 'These three flags represent the three letters B C N and the signal is: "I Will Not Abandon You."'

And so as I sat by the fire and thought of the Royal Navy's epic exploit by the sand-dunes of Dunkirk, I saw again that picture in a house in Orkney and the signal run up the mast, 'I Will Not Abandon You.' The Navy will be there.

There is similar heartening and encouragement for all mankind. Jesus Christ the Captain of our Salvation has run up that same signal for all, 'I Will Not Abandon You.'

However stormy the sea, however dark the night, however far men may stray, Jesus Christ will not abandon us.

WILLIAM MOORE.

*Alves, Morayshire.*

#### Givers of Life.

The C.M.S. review of their work during 1939-40 (6d. net) opens with the searching paragraph: "I wonder what the world is coming to?" How often this is said in days of perplexity and crisis. Very different was the spirit of the Church in the first century. As a preacher pointed out some time ago, St. Paul or one of his company would have said in any situation: "I know what has come to the world." To him the dominant fact was that Jesus Christ was alive, active, present, and at work in and through His Body, the Church, and neither "things present nor things to come" could shake his confidence. Forces of death and destruction might do their worst, but their power was limited; it was the living Christ and He only who could claim that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him.

In *Givers of Life* the story is told how day by day Christ continues His life-giving work in Africa, the Near East, India, Japan, and China. There is no hiding of defects, or failures; no over-emphasis on what has been achieved.

Looking at the first chapter—that on Africa—there is an account of the barriers of superstition, drunkenness, and polygamy. An instance of superstition: 'The Government of Uganda have decided to erect a memorial pillar in Busoga on

the spot where Bishop Hannington was murdered. The local inhabitants are disturbed by this proposal, and are convinced that if any calamity, great or small, befalls the district in years to come it will be due to this pillar. They are resolved, therefore, not to carry stone or take any part in the building of the memorial.'

On drunkenness a missionary reports from the Kenya highlands: 'Of late there has been a great movement of the Spirit of God which shows itself not least in the manner in which many natives have of themselves freely renounced native beer drinking. A pile of gourds, horns, and beer-making apparatus adorns our vestry, all of which have been surrendered publicly.'

Many are the signs in Africa of awakening to spiritual life. From Kampala, Archdeacon Herbert writes: 'Many comparatively well-educated young men are coming forward and are offering themselves for ordination; they are willing to give up lucrative posts and work for the Church on a lower scale of pay, so that they can help their own people in spiritual things.'

#### Paganism.

More than a hundred years ago, in 1834 to be precise, the poet Heine spoke of the strength of pagan forces in Germany, in words which have received dramatic fulfilment to-day. After saying how Christianity had occasionally calmed the German lust for battle, he goes on: 'But when once that restraining talisman the Cross is broken then the old combatants will rage with the fury celebrated by the Norse poets. . . . Then the old stone gods will rise from unremembered ruins and Thor will leap to life at last and bring down his gigantic hammer on the Gothic cathedrals.' 'Do not smile,' he continues. 'It is no mere phantasy . . . it will come, and when it (the German thunder) crashes, it will crash as nothing in history has crashed before; never doubt it, the hour will come.'<sup>1</sup>

#### Substitutes.

We are faced here with one of the most bewildering paradoxes of all times. How has it come about that just when knowledge of every kind has made such immense strides, brought release to the human mind, vast material benefits to the world, and drawn the world together, there should have been this setback? Darkness and superstition have fled in front of this knowledge, and in more

<sup>1</sup> John A. Hughes, *The Light of Christ in a Pagan World*, 27.

ways than one the earth has been opened up and set free. And yet it is in this very hour, this age of science, that men are turning again, as another writer says, to swastikas and other emblems of hope. . . . 'Now, instead of looking to the hills, they choose a wishbone maybe. *They must have something.*' That probably explains it. Something has been lost, and they do not know what. They therefore grasp at a substitute to take its place, and it is a portent of more than ordinary significance, that in some German churches the Swastika has been elevated to the level of the Cross. One arresting fact about that Swastika has impressed itself upon me. As a symbol of the Sun the Swastika should move from left to right to represent its ongoing. But the Nazi Swastika has its arms set the other way: it moves backwards. Is this the deliberate recoil from all that has stood for Christian civilization? <sup>1</sup>

#### Religious Poetry.

The Oxford University Press has added another fine volume to its Oxford Books of Verse. It is an anthology of *Christian Verse* (8s. 6d. net), chosen and edited by Lord David Cecil. The collection, from the carols and religious poems of the Middle Ages down to our own time, is full and representative.

The Introduction (pages xi. to xxxiii.) repays close attention, for to Lord Cecil this is more than a collection of religious verse; it is 'a history of Christianity in England and an exhibition of the varieties of the religious temperament.' He divides poetry into four phases, the second phase ending with Milton being the greatest, and the greatest figure in this period John Donne. 'Religion was to him so stimulating a subject that there was hardly an aspect of it that did not fire him to poetry. . . . And the Christian scheme seemed created to express his personal experience. He did not just believe in the doctrines of sin and expiation and Divine grace; he found them confirmed in his own life. Not that he was a saint. By nature Donne was rancorous, proud, morbid, and sensual. But this was an advantage to him as a religious poet. For the struggle within him between the natural man and the regenerate gave his work an extraordinary tension.'

Our own period does not yield Lord Cecil many names. Among the few are T. S. Eliot, W. Force Stead, Fredegond Shove, and Ruth Pitter. We quote Fredegond Shove's poem:

<sup>1</sup> John A. Hughes, *The Light of Christ in a Pagan World*, 29.

#### THE NEW GHOST.

'And he casting away his garment rose and came to Jesus.'

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,  
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was—  
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of  
death,  
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold  
sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his  
Lord,  
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean  
sword,  
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,  
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late  
spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw  
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one  
without flaw,  
And they embraced in the churchyard where  
the robins play,  
And the daffodils hang their heads, as they burn  
away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see  
That He kissed the unsheathed ghost that was  
gone free—  
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold  
ground;  
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that  
his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's  
word—  
As on a wild, April day, springs up a small  
bird—  
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the  
Lord's cheek,  
And for the greatness of their love neither of  
them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,  
Over the young crocuses, under the green may  
That was not quite in flower yet—to a far-  
distant land;  
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud  
holding the sun's hand.

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