

## A Letter to a Young Man entering on his Ministry who is perplexed by 'Pacifism.'<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR X,

You ask me to say something on 'Pacifism.' You know well the arguments that 'Pacifists' use, for the 'Pacifist' societies regard theological students as easy subjects for their propaganda, and the Peace Group in your college made you familiar with their literature. You yourself, you tell me, used to feel that as a Christian you had to be a 'Pacifist.' But now that you realize what a Nazi victory would mean, you are beginning to doubt your 'Pacifism' and yet still feel that as a Christian you cannot give support to war.

As your old teacher, I cannot refuse your request. Yet I should hate to appear as an advocate of war. I loathe war and regard it as the greatest of all evils, save the still worse evil of subjection to cruel tyranny. Perhaps I have failed in my duty in not speaking out more plainly against the 'Pacifist' position. I try as far as possible to avoid strife with my brethren, and when this issue has been debated at our denominational assemblies, those of us who felt that the issue was far more complex than the 'Pacifists' would recognize have been reluctant to intervene, knowing that, if we did so, we should be denounced as traitors to Christianity by those whose advocacy of peace does not obviously spring from a peaceable spirit.

Besides, the problem of war cannot be rightly treated in isolation, nor can it be solved merely by reference to the Sermon on the Mount. You will remember Brunner's treatment of the whole moral significance of Christianity in *The Divine Imperative*. Christianity gives us but one command—the command to love. What that love is we know to its fullness only in the Cross of Christ, and that command we have to obey as best we can within the 'orders' of sex, industry, and the State. All these 'orders' or 'ordinances' are of God's appointment, and yet we know them not as God wills them to be, but as perverted by the race's sin. Thus the State,

as we know it, even in so humane a democracy as ours, bears on it the signs of sin. It is a divine 'order,' but an order corrupted by our corporate sin. Yet sin-stained as is the State, the individualism of the Manchester School is obviously impossible to-day. The State to-day has a paternal function and provides services we now see to be indispensable for the well-being of the community. Yet increasingly humane as are the activities of the State to which we ourselves belong, it depends and must depend on force. You will be getting your first income-tax assessment. You will not be able, as a good Scot is said to have done, to return it with a note that you 'do not propose to join this society!'

One of the difficulties of discussing the 'Pacifist' position is that its advocates employ so many different arguments. Thus Professor G. H. C. Macgregor, whom to know is to honour, in his *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism* denies that the Christian 'Pacifist' position is based on 'the repudiation of all use of force in the dealings of man with man either as individuals or as unity in the community,' and speaks of 'the absurdity of that position.' Yet this position to whose 'absurdity' Professor Macgregor refers is precisely that of some very gifted 'Pacifists' whom I have known. They said that all force was wrong, and held, for instance, that no Christian could serve in the Indian Civil Service, for he might have to employ force to put down rioting. That position means sheer anarchy, and involves the denial that the community or State is a divine 'order.' Force is in itself morally neutral. It is the purpose for which it is used that determines its moral value. The functions of the Church and of the State are different. Christian men may have as their vocation that of the judge, the prison-governor or the policeman. No State is fulfilling its true function unless it protects the innocent and restrains the violent. The duel has gone and private citizens do not carry arms, not because the use of force in itself is held to be wrong, but because the State, if necessary, uses force to secure justice. And war, too, will become obsolete only when justice has behind it needed strength. As Mr. F. L. Lucas has said, 'We shall never have peace till all the peaceable are prepared to fight side by side to the death for peace.'

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cave, Principal of New College, London, and Professor of Theology in the University of London, was asked by his students to speak to them on the problem of war on which they had heard much from the representatives of 'Pacifist' societies. He did so on the lines of this paper. They were much influenced, and the editors of this magazine are publishing the talk, believing it will be of use to other young men and women.

But all this you may say is merely worldly wisdom. What of the arguments the 'Pacifists' use to show that no Christian can engage in war? It would be easier to answer these if they were less numerous and more consistent. You know the Old Testament too well to be impressed by the argument that God said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Whatever view we hold of the Old Testament, it is clear that it does not prohibit war. Cain is blamed for killing Abel, but David is not blamed for killing Goliath. Our Lord's application of the command of love to the case of enemies can, with whatever difficulty, be obeyed in war. We think, for instance, of British sailors off the coast of Norway diving into the icy sea to rescue Germans who had been trying to torpedo their ship.

Or again, I have heard men say, as you will have done, 'Can you picture Christ using the bayonet?' Of course I cannot. His sole vocation was to be the Saviour of the world. That vocation could not be combined with that of a soldier. There are other vocations also with which it could not be combined. He could not have been a husband and father. I hear that you are hoping to get married soon, so you evidently do not feel that any vocation is wrong which was impossible for Christ.

The Christian gospel must make war abhorrent to us, and make us long for its abolition. But war is not one of the issues with which the New Testament directly deals. The Jews whom our Lord addressed were under the Roman peace; they were not, as we are, voting members of a democracy. Our Lord's words, being addressed in the first instance to His hearers, do not deal directly with the political problems which perplex us. We think, for instance, of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. I will leave you to name the counterparts to-day of the Priest and Levite who were content to pass by on the other side, touching no wounds and pleased that their hands were thus kept clean. The Red Cross Organization or the Friends' Ambulances surely share in the praise the Good Samaritan received. But the parable was not addressed to those responsible for good government. Are we wrong if we think that if there be a road infested by brigands, admirable and necessary as are the services of the Good Samaritans, no less necessary is that of those who will clear the road permanently of highwaymen? The use of force to suppress injustice is not the function of the Christian Church, but it is the function of a good government. You remember how St. Paul speaks of the ruler as 'a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.' 'Wrath,' as you know, denotes for

Paul the retributive order of the world. 'Wrath' and 'Law' are not the full expressions of the character of God. That can perfectly be seen only in the holy love of Christ's Cross. But, though retribution is for God not an end, it is a means. The State can never be a Church. The State is the sphere of retribution, and has justice for its first concern. Christ's Kingdom, as He Himself said, 'is not of this world.' And He added, 'If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.' There are the two kingdoms, and the tension and tragedy of our present life is that we belong to both.

These two spheres, though they interpenetrate, cannot be identified. It is this that makes so much 'Pacifist' propaganda seem irrelevant. 'Pacifists' speak as if Christians belonged only to the Church or as if the State could be a Church. Thus Mr. Leyton Richards writes, 'The real alternative to the military way is the missionary way.' That is to confuse the function of the Church and of the State. The State can never be missionary. A missionary has for his vocation the proclamation of the gospel. However dangerous be his situation, he has no right to be armed, unless he live in a country where arms are necessary against the attacks of lions or tigers! It is not his business to defend himself or his converts. But if a man be not a missionary but a Government official entrusted with rule, it is his task to protect the innocent even though that involves the use of force.

Many 'Pacifists' I know rely not on specific arguments but on the general principle that for the Christian love is all sufficient. Much depends on what is meant by love, and that involves our whole interpretation of the gospel. How surprised the writers of the New Testament, for instance, would have been had they been told that, as Canon H. R. L. Sheppard put it, Christianity means 'Christ's views about God and the Sermon on the Mount.' Even that Sermon speaks of retribution, whilst the writers of the New Testament were not concerned with 'views about God.' Their proclamation, their *kerugma*, was of God's mighty acts in Christ. That coming of Christ had for its purpose salvation, yet, for those who rejected Him, it meant judgment. As the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen makes clear, when the Lord of the Vineyard sent His Son, that final act of grace brought about the catastrophe of judgment; the Son was killed and the husbandmen punished.

It is that note of judgment that we miss in much 'Pacifist' literature. Annas and Caiaphas were not better men for having met Jesus. Judas, one of

His disciples, betrayed Him. The Cross meant judgment for those that rejected Jesus, judgment for the Jewish nation, which caused Jesus to bid the daughters of Jerusalem sorrow not for Him but for themselves. The gift of the Church was a fresh provision of God's mercy for individuals, but the Jewish nation condemned itself when it rejected its Messiah.

Unconvincing as we find the arguments of Christian 'Pacifists,' we share with them to the full their horror of war. What shocks us is not that men should kill or be killed. If those that plot injustice alone suffered, we could be content sadly to leave them to their deserts. It is that war involves the suffering of the innocent, and on its present scale is almost the worst evil which can befall the world. We who lived through the last war did not need to be reminded of war's horrors, and some of us have prayed for peace as we have prayed for nothing else. We had hoped that the League of Nations would secure this. We knew, indeed, that Geneva was not the New Jerusalem, and that the polity of the League could not be identified with the Kingdom of God. It was a political method, and we may not put Christ's name on any political banner. But the League seemed the best political expedient to secure peace, and so it might have proved, had all peaceable people been ready to enforce its sanctions. It is strange to find 'Pacifists' condemning the League's failure to resist aggression. Peace cannot be secured unless the peaceful are stronger than the war-mongers. Those who pressed for unilateral disarmament and sought to get men to pledge themselves never to fight, ought not in fairness to blame statesmen for not resisting the breakers of the Covenant. Every peaceful nation in Europe deplored our premature disarmament. Had we been strong, the League might have secured peace. For its failure, 'Pacifist' agitation has a terrible responsibility. If you think that judgment too severe, read, if you have not yet, *Spiritual Values and World Affairs*, by Sir Alfred Zimmern, who is a Christian, but a Christian who, unlike you and me, has expert knowledge of foreign affairs. As he points out, 'Pacifists' had no right to pretend to be supporters of the League when they were 'its most dangerous opponents.' 'The object of the founders of the League was the effective prevention of war, and the heart of the Covenant is the obligation of mutual assistance between members of the League for their protection against attack.'

When Herr Hitler broke yet another promise and marched last year into Prague, it became impossible

any longer to assert that he was merely trying to rectify the supposed injustices of the Treaty of Versailles. Yet, even since the war began, we have been told that we ought to be willing to make 'sacrifices' to avoid slaughter. But what sacrifices? The first sacrifices asked for would have been the surrender to his rule of the small countries he is cruelly oppressing and the giving up of colonies in Africa to one who describes Africans as 'half-apes,' existing only to be exploited.

It is not surprising that when you entered college you should have been a 'Pacifist.' At twenty, we see life in black and white, and in our self-confidence easily imagine that Christianity is the romantic following of our Hero Jesus. You are older now, and with age there comes to most men a greater realism. It is significant that as the age limits rise, a smaller proportion of men avail themselves of the easy way of the Peace Pledge Union to avoid the danger of military service, in spite of the fact that as many of the older men are married the sacrifice they make is greater. And in your college course you have gained a deeper knowledge of the world's sin and your own, and know now that the Christian gospel is different far from an idealism veneered with Christian phrases.

You tell me you are not now as convinced a 'Pacifist' as once you were. Do not let old associations get you into strange company. We have seen in this country how easily a 'Pacifist' movement can be utilized by German propagandists, and Norway and Holland show how tragic in its effect can be the association of honest 'Pacifists' and dishonest Fifth-columnists and Nazis.

When you go to your Church, you will go there as its Minister. I hope you will pray for the bereaved and suffering, not only of your own, but of all the warring lands. The members of your Church will differ on the grave issue of war. If 'Pacifist' meant what from its derivation it should mean, a 'peace-maker,' then every Christian would be a 'Pacifist.' We all hate war; we all desire the establishment of lasting peace. Don't speak as if so-called 'Pacifists' are the only lovers of peace, and by your arrogance and intolerance drive away from the Church all who differ from you. By now it is clear to all what Nazi domination would mean—the death for the time of all that honourable men hold dear. If our country is to endure to the end, it will be because, not only within but without the Churches, men and women believe that treachery and cruelty cannot be allowed to triumph. If you go humbly among your people you will be shamed by their courage from all priggishness and self-complacency.

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 *κρατείν*.<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>

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<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.