



*Bloch*

*Taft*

**"Come Unto Me"**

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## "Come Unto Me"

AN INTERPRETATION

COME UNTO ME," a bas-relief in the Hall of Religion at A Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago, 1933, was made by Lorado Taft from the painting by the Danish artist, Karl Bloch. It was produced by this world-famous sculptor for the particular place which it fills in the exhibit of cooperating Protestantism. The figures are of heroic size in ivory against a black background and the group dominates the room in which it stands.

Professor Albert E. Bailey gives the following interpretation of the picture in his book *The Gospel in Art*.

"The man at the right is a criminal. His hands are bound with chains and his face still betrays the fear of the hunted. He dares not touch the Master; he even approaches from behind as if afraid of being seen. . . . His hands are folded hesitatingly as if he feels that prayer and its answer never could be for him, that forgiveness and freedom were too wonderful to be true. . . .

"A man past middle life has thrown himself upon his knees, and with a clutch almost of desperation draws himself to the Master's side. His eyes are closed to shut out the sight of this wretched world and to shut in the vision of help and healing that has drawn him here. Is his malady a sickness or a moral plague? Something at least it is that has caused him infinite wretchedness and has left him barely strength

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to stagger to the Fount of Mercy. With the touch even of the garments there comes something almost of ecstasy into the face, as if at last, after years of pain, the sufferer has found release. . . .

"There is peace, too, on the face of the old man who sits by the other side of Jesus. It is not the peace of sin forgiven or of sickness past, for this kindly patriarch has suffered little. He has toiled patiently along life's pathway, bearing without complaint the trials of the road and cheering the hearts of his fellow-travelers with his faith and courage. Now in his old age God has granted him a full vision of what life means. The ideal he has followed afar off has become flesh; Heaven has come down to earth, and he at last beholds its glory, 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' His face might well be the face of Simeon as he cried, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

"The three on the left are perhaps mother and daughter and son. Blessed mother, who has kept, through all her life of toil, the aspirations of her youth, and whose soul leaps up to greet this man of God. Do you see how her peasant face is transfigured by this moment of realization? All she has willed or hoped or dreamed of good she has suddenly found to exist, not its semblance but itself. Her life has been but a broken arc; here is the perfect round. And with that joy come awe and self-abasement as she realizes how poor her life has been. But how fortunate for the daughter that at the beginning of her womanhood she can have this vision of the perfect life! All through her journey it will be

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her guide and stay; and in the burden and heat of the day as she pauses to raise her face to the sky, like the reapers on Esdraelon, she will never fail to see the snows of Hermon eternally white against the blue, and feel its coolness and its balm. And the mother has brought the lad with her. He is a little frightened, perhaps, and puzzled. He is too young to know what it is to see Jesus, but not too young to feel the pull of a great personality at his heart. Soon the spiritual life in him will come to consciousness; soon he will hear a voice saying, 'Son, give me thy heart.' When that day of awakening comes, will he see again in memory this gracious figure with its hands stretched out to all the world—stretched out to him? And before the evil days come will he say those fateful words, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth'?

"There is only one discordant person in the picture. He stands alone in the background, untouched by the call. His hard face, in part concealed by his hard hand, reveals the epitaph of a dead soul, of one who has sinned away his day of grace, whose Will to Believe in the unseen and the eternal has perished under the impact of things that are seen and temporal. The call of the market place has long since drowned the call of Heaven. Life's values for him are all minted with the superscription of Cæsar, and there is nothing left for God. To such as him Jesus addressed those pathetic words that are at the same time a judgment, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life!'

"Thus Bloch has given us not the seven ages of Man, but seven aspects of the soul."

—From *The Gospel in Art*, by Albert E. Bailey. Published by The Pilgrim Press. Used by permission.

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