

Tolstoy Leo

**The Kingdom of God
is Within You / Christianity
and Patriotism / Miscellanies**



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Lev Tolstoy

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

Or, Christianity Not as a Mystical Teaching but as a New Concept of Life

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John viii. 23).
And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. x. 28).
Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men (1. Cor. vii. 23).

In the year 1884 I wrote a book under the title, *My Religion*. In this book I really expounded what my religion is.

In expounding my belief in Christ's teaching, I could not help but express the reason why I do not believe in the ecclesiastic faith, which is generally called Christianity, and why I consider it to be a delusion.

Among the many deviations of this teaching of Christ, I pointed out the chief deviation, namely, the failure to acknowledge the commandment of non-resistance to evil, which more obviously than any other shows the distortion of Christ's teaching in the church doctrine.

I knew very little, like the rest of us, as to what had been done and preached and written in former days on this subject of non-resistance to evil. I knew what had been said on this subject by the fathers of the church, Origen, Tertullian, and others, and I knew also that there have existed certain so-called sects of the Mennonites, Herrnhuters, Quakers, who do not admit for a Christian the use of weapons and who do not enter military service, but what had been done by these so-called sects for the solution of this question was quite unknown to me.

My book, as I expected, was held back by the Russian censor, but, partly in consequence of my reputation as a writer, partly because it interested people, this book was disseminated in manuscripts and lithographic reprints in Russia and in translations abroad, and called forth, on the one hand, on the part of men who shared my views, a series of references to works written on the subject, and, on the other, a series of criticisms on the thoughts expressed in that book itself.

Both, together with the historical phenomena of recent times, have made many things clear to me and have brought me to new deductions and conclusions, which I wish to express.

First I shall tell of the information which I received concerning the history of the question of non-resistance to evil, then of the opinions on this subject which were expressed by ecclesiastic critics, that is, such as profess the Christian religion, and also by laymen, that is, such as do not profess the Christian religion; and finally, those deductions to which I was brought by both and by the historical events of recent times.

I

Among the first answers to my book there came some letters from the American Quakers. In these letters, which express their sympathy with my views concerning the unlawfulness for Christianity of all violence and war, the Quakers informed me of the details of their so-called sect, which for more than two hundred years has in fact professed Christ's teaching about non-resistance to evil, and which has used no arms in order to defend itself. With their letters, the Quakers sent me their pamphlets, periodicals, and books. From these periodicals, pamphlets, and books which they sent me I learned to what extent they had many years ago incontestably proved the obligation for a Christian to fulfil the commandment about non-resistance to evil and had laid bare the incorrectness of the church teaching, which admitted executions and wars.

Having proved, by a whole series of considerations and texts, that war, that is, the maiming and killing of men, is incompatible with a religion which is based on love of peace and good-will to men, the Quakers affirm and prove that nothing has so much contributed to the obscuration of Christ's truth in the eyes of the pagans and impeded the dissemination of Christianity in the world as the non-acknowledgment of this commandment by men who called themselves Christians, – as the permission granted to a Christian to wage war and use violence.

"Christ's teaching, which entered into the consciousness of men, not by means of the sword and of violence," they say, "but by means of non-resistance to evil, can be disseminated in the world only through humility, meekness, peace, concord, and love among its followers.

"A Christian, according to the teaching of God Himself, can be guided in his relations to men by peace only, and so there cannot be such an authority as would compel a Christian to act contrary to God's teaching and contrary to the chief property of a Christian in relation to those who are near to him.

"The rule of state necessity," they say, "may compel those to become untrue to God's law, who for the sake of worldly advantages try to harmonize what cannot be harmonized, but for a Christian, who sincerely believes in this, that the adherence to Christ's teaching gives him salvation, this rule can have no meaning."

My acquaintance with the activity of the Quakers and with their writings, – with Fox, Paine, and especially with Dymond's book (1827), – showed me that not only had the impossibility of uniting Christianity with violence and war been recognized long ago, but that this incompatibility had long ago been proved so clearly and so incontestably that one has only to marvel how this impossible connection of the Christian teaching with violence, which has been preached all this time by the churches, could have been continued.

Besides the information received by me from the Quakers, I, at about the same time, received, again from America, information in regard to the same subject from an entirely different source, which had been quite unknown to me before.

The son of William Lloyd Garrison, the famous champion for the liberation of the negroes, wrote to me that, when he read my book, in which he found ideas resembling those expressed by his father in 1838, he, assuming that it might be interesting for me to know this, sent me the "Declaration of Non-resistance," which his father had made about fifty years ago.

This declaration had its origin under the following conditions: William Lloyd Garrison, in speaking before a society for the establishment of peace among men, which existed in America in 1838, about the measures for abolishing war, came to the conclusion that the establishment of universal peace could be based only on the obvious recognition of the commandment of non-resistance to evil (Matt. v. 39) in all its significance, as this was understood by the Quakers, with whom Garrison stood in friendly relations. When he came to this conclusion, he formulated

and proposed to the society the following declaration, which was then, in 1838, signed by many members.

DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS ADOPTED BY THE PEACE CONVENTION, HELD IN BOSTON IN 1838

"We, the undersigned, regard it as due to ourselves, to the cause which we love, to the country in which we live, and to the world, to publish a Declaration, expressive of the principles we cherish, the purposes we aim to accomplish, and the measures we shall adopt to carry forward the work of peaceful and universal reformation.

"We cannot acknowledge allegiance to any human government... We recognize but one King and Lawgiver, one Judge and Ruler of mankind...

"Our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind. We love the land of our nativity, only as we love all other lands. The interests, rights, and liberties of American citizens are no more dear to us than are those of the whole human race. Hence we can allow no appeal to patriotism, to revenge any national insult or injury...

"We conceive, that if a nation has no right to defend itself against foreign enemies, or to punish its invaders, no individual possesses that right in his own case. The unit cannot be of greater importance than the aggregate... But if a rapacious and bloodthirsty soldiery, thronging these shores from abroad, with intent to commit rapine and destroy life, may not be resisted by the people or magistracy, then ought no resistance to be offered to domestic troublers of the public peace, or of private security...

"The dogma, that all the governments of the world are approvingly ordained of God, and that the powers that be in the United States, in Russia, in Turkey, are in accordance with His will, is not less absurd than impious. It makes the impartial Author of human freedom and equality unequal and tyrannical. It cannot be affirmed that the powers that be, in any nation, are actuated by the spirit, or guided by the example of Christ, in the treatment of enemies: therefore, they cannot be agreeable to the will of God: and, therefore, their overthrow, by a spiritual regeneration of their subjects, is inevitable.

"We register our testimony, not only against all wars, whether offensive or defensive, but all preparations for war; against every naval ship, every arsenal, every fortification; against the militia system and a standing army; against all military chieftains and soldiers; against all monuments commemorative of victory over a foreign foe, all trophies won in battle, all celebrations in honour of military or naval exploits: against all appropriations for the defence of a nation by force and arms on the part of any legislative body; against every edict of government, requiring of its subjects military service. Hence, we deem it unlawful to bear arms, or to hold a military office.

"As every human government is upheld by physical strength, and its laws are enforced virtually at the point of the bayonet, we cannot hold any office which imposes upon its incumbent the obligation to do right, on pain of imprisonment or death. We therefore voluntarily exclude ourselves from every legislative and judicial body, and repudiate all human politics, worldly honours, and stations of authority. If we cannot occupy a seat in the legislature, or on the bench, neither can we elect others to act as our substitutes in any such capacity.

"It follows that we cannot sue any man at law, to compel him by force to restore anything which he may have wrongfully taken from us or others; but, if he has seized our coat, we shall surrender up our cloak, rather than subject him to punishment.

"We believe that the penal code of the old covenant, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, has been abrogated by Jesus Christ; and that, under the new covenant, the forgiveness, instead of the punishment of enemies, has been enjoined upon all His disciples, in all cases whatsoever. To

extort money from enemies, or set them upon a pillory, or cast them into prison, or hang them upon a gallows, is obviously not to forgive, but to take retribution...

"The history of mankind is crowded with evidences, proving that physical coercion is not adapted to moral regeneration; that the sinful disposition of man can be subdued only by love; that evil can be exterminated from the earth only by goodness; that it is not safe to rely upon an arm of flesh ... to preserve us from harm; that there is great security in being gentle, harmless, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy; that it is only the meek who shall inherit the earth, for the violent, who resort to the sword, shall perish with the sword. Hence, as a measure of sound policy, of safety to property, life, and liberty, of public quietude, and private enjoyment, as well as on the ground of allegiance to Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, we cordially adopt the non-resistance principle; being confident that it provides for all possible consequences, will ensure all things needful to us, is armed with omnipotent power, and must ultimately triumph over every assailing foe.

"We advocate no jacobinical doctrines. The spirit of jacobinism is the spirit of retaliation, violence, and murder. It neither fears God, nor regards man. We would be filled with the spirit of Christ. If we abide by our principles, it is impossible for us to be disorderly, or plot treason, or participate in any evil work: we shall submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; obey all the requirements of government, except such as we deem contrary to the commands of the gospel; and in no wise resist the operation of law, except by meekly submitting to the penalty of disobedience.

"But, while we shall adhere to the doctrines of non-resistance and passive submission to enemies, we purpose, in a moral and spiritual sense, to speak and act boldly in the cause of God; to assail iniquity in high places and in low places; to apply our principles to all existing civil, political, legal, and ecclesiastical institutions; and to hasten the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever.

"It appears to us as a self-evident truth, that, whatever the gospel is designed to destroy, any period of the world, being contrary to it, ought now to be abandoned. If, then, the time is predicted, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and men shall not learn the art of war any more, it follows that all who manufacture, sell, or wield these deadly weapons do thus array themselves against the peaceful dominion of the Son of God on earth.

"Having thus briefly, but frankly, stated our principles and purposes, we proceed to specify the measures we propose to adopt, in carrying our object into effect.

"We expect to prevail through the foolishness of preaching – striving to commend ourselves unto every man's conscience, in the sight of God. From the press, we shall promulgate our sentiments as widely as practicable. We shall endeavour to secure the coöperation of all persons, of whatever name or sect... Hence we shall employ lectures, circulate tracts and publications, form societies, and petition our State and national governments in relation to the subject of universal peace. It will be our leading object to devise ways and means for effecting a radical change in the views, feelings, and practices of society respecting the sinfulness of war, and the treatment of enemies.

"In entering upon the great work before us, we are not unmindful that, in its prosecution, we may be called to test our sincerity, even as in a fiery ordeal. It may subject us to insult, outrage, suffering, yea, even death itself. We anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, calumny. Tumults may arise against us. The ungodly and the violent, the proud and pharisaical, the ambitious and tyrannical, principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, may combine to crush us. So they treated the Messiah, whose example we are humbly striving to imitate... We shall not be afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. Our confidence is in the Lord Almighty, not in man. Having withdrawn from human protection, what can sustain us but that faith which overcomes the world? We shall not think it strange concerning the fiery ordeal

which is to try us, as though some strange thing had happened unto us; but rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. Wherefore, we commit the keeping of our souls to God, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. 'For every one that forsakes houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for Christ's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'

"Firmly relying upon the certain and universal triumph of the sentiments contained in this Declaration, however formidable may be the opposition arrayed against them, in solemn testimony of our faith in their divine origin, we hereby affix our signatures to it; commending it to the reason and conscience of mankind, giving ourselves no anxiety as to what may befall us, and resolving, in the strength of the Lord God, calmly and meekly to abide the issue."

Immediately after this declaration Garrison founded a society of non-resistance, and a periodical, called *The Non-Resistant*, in which was preached the doctrine of non-resistance in all its significance and with all its consequences, as it had been expressed in the "Declaration." The information as to the later fate of the society and the periodical of non-resistance I received from the beautiful biography of William Lloyd Garrison, written by his sons.

The society and the periodical did not exist long: the majority of Garrison's collaborators in matters of freeing the slaves, fearing lest the too radical demands, as expressed in *The Non-Resistant*, might repel people from the practical work of the liberation of the negroes, refused to profess the principle of non-resistance, as it had been expressed in the "Declaration," and the society and the periodical ceased to exist.

This "Declaration" by Garrison, which so powerfully and so beautifully expressed such an important profession of faith, ought, it seems, to have startled men and to have become universally known and a subject of wide discussion. But nothing of the kind happened. It is not only unknown in Europe, but even among the Americans, who so highly esteem Garrison's memory, this declaration is almost unknown.

The same ingloriousness has fallen to the share of another champion of non-resistance to evil, the American Adin Ballou, who lately died, and who preached this doctrine for fifty years. How little is known of what refers to the question of non-resistance may be seen from the fact that Garrison's son, who has written an excellent biography of his father in four volumes, this son of Garrison, in reply to my question whether the society of non-resistance was still in existence, and whether there were any followers of it, answered me that so far as he knew the society had fallen to pieces, and there existed no followers of this doctrine, whereas at the time of his writing, there lived in Hopedale, Massachusetts, Adin Ballou, who had taken part in Garrison's labours and had devoted fifty years of his life to the oral and printed propaganda of the doctrine of non-resistance. Later on I received a letter from Wilson, a disciple and assistant of Ballou, and entered into direct communication with Ballou himself. I wrote to Ballou, and he answered me and sent me his writings. Here are a few extracts from them:

"Jesus Christ is my Lord and Master," says Ballou in one of the articles,¹ in which he arraigns the inconsistency of the Christians who recognize the right of defence and war. "I have covenanted to forsake all and follow Him, through good and evil report, until death. But I am nevertheless a Democratic-Republican citizen of the United States, implicitly sworn to bear true allegiance to my country, and to support its Constitution, if need be, with my life. Jesus Christ requires me to do unto others as I would that others should do unto me. The Constitution of the United States requires me to do unto twenty-seven hundred slaves" (there were slaves then, now we may put the working people in their place) "the very contrary of what I would have them do unto me, viz., assist to keep them in a grievous bondage... But I am quite easy. I vote on. I help govern on. I am willing to hold

¹ In *The Non-Resistant*, Vol. i., No. 4, Hopedale, Milford, Mass., Feb. 15, 1845.

any office I may be elected to under the Constitution. And I am still a Christian. I profess on. I find no difficulty in keeping covenant both with Christ and the Constitution...

"Jesus Christ forbids me to resist evil-doers by taking 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth, blood for blood, and life for life.' My government requires the very reverse, and depends, for its own self-preservation, on the halter, the musket, and the sword, seasonably employed against its domestic and foreign enemies. Accordingly, the land is well furnished with gibbets, prisons, arsenals, train-bands, soldiers, and ships-of-war. In the maintenance and use of this expensive life-destroying apparatus, we can exemplify the virtues of forgiving our injurers, loving our enemies, blessing them that curse us, and doing good to those that hate us. For this reason, we have regular Christian chaplains to pray for us, and call down the sins of God on our holy murderers...

"I see it all; and yet I insist that I am as good a Christian as ever. I fellowship all; I vote on; I help govern on; I profess on; and I glory in being at once a devoted Christian, and a no less devoted adherent to the existing government. I will not give in to those miserable non-resistant notions. I will not throw away my political influence, and leave unprincipled men to carry on government alone...

"The Constitution says, 'Congress shall have power to declare war.'... I agree to this. I endorse it. I swear to help carry it through... What then, am I less a Christian? Is not war a Christian service? Is it not perfectly Christian to murder hundreds of thousands of fellow human beings; to ravish defenceless females, sack and burn cities, and exact all the other cruelties of war? Out upon these new-fangled scruples! This is the very way to forgive injuries, and love our enemies! If we only do it all in true love, nothing can be more Christian than wholesale murder!"

In another pamphlet, under the title, *How Many Does It Take?*² he says, "How many does it take to metamorphose wickedness into righteousness? One man must not kill. If he does, it is murder. Two, ten, one hundred men, acting on their own responsibility, must not kill. If they do, it is still murder. But a state or nation may kill as many as they please, and it is no murder. It is just, necessary, commendable, and right. Only get people enough to agree to it, and the butchery of myriads of human beings is perfectly innocent. But how many men does it take? This is the question. Just so with theft, robbery, burglary, and all other crimes... But a whole nation can commit it... But how many does it take?"³

Here is Ballou's catechism, composed for his flock (*The Catechism of Non-Resistance*⁴):

Q. Whence originated the term "non-resistance?"

A. From the injunction, "Resist not evil," Matt. v. 39.

Q. What does the term signify?

A. It expresses a high Christian virtue, prescribed by Christ.

Q. Is the word "resistance" to be taken in its widest meaning, that is, as showing that no resistance whatever is to be shown to evil?

A. No, it is to be taken in the strict sense of the Saviour's injunction; that is, we are not to retaliate evil with evil. Evil is to be resisted by all just means, but never with evil.

Q. From what can we see that Christ in such cases prescribed non-resistance?

A. From the words which He then used. He said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

² Not a pamphlet, but an article in *The Non-Resistant*, Vol. i. No. 4, and very imperfectly quoted by Tolstoy.

³ To this Tolstoy adds, on his own responsibility: "Why must one, ten, one hundred men not violate God's law, while very many may?"

⁴ Translated freely, with some omissions. —*Author's Note.* I fail to find this *Catechism* in any of Ballou's writings accessible in and about Boston. The nearest approach to these questions and answers is found scattered throughout his *Christian Non-Resistance, in Its Important Bearings, Illustrated and Defended*, Philadelphia, 1846.

Q. To whom does Jesus refer in the words, "It has been said?"

A. To the patriarchs and prophets, to what they said, – to what is contained in the writings of the Old Testament, which the Jews generally call the Law and the Prophets.

Q. What injunctions did Christ mean by "It hath been said?"

A. Those injunctions by which Noah, Moses, and other prophets authorize men to inflict personal injury on injurers, in order to punish and destroy evil.

Q. Quote these precepts.

A. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man (Gen. ix. 6). He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death, and if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Ex. xxi. 12, 23-25).

And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him: breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again (Lev. xxiv. 17, 19, 20).

And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: and thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Deut. xix. 18, 19, 21). These are the precepts of which Jesus is speaking.

Noah, Moses, and the prophets taught that he who kills, maims, and tortures his neighbours does evil. To resist such evil and destroy it, the doer of evil is to be punished by death or maiming or some personal injury. Insult is to be opposed to insult, murder to murder, torture to torture, evil to evil. Thus taught Noah, Moses, and the prophets. But Christ denies it all. "But I say unto you," it says in the Gospel, "that ye resist not evil, resist not an insult with an insult, but rather bear the repeated insult from the doer of evil." What was authorized is prohibited. If we understand what kind of resistance they taught, we clearly see what we are taught by Christ's non-resistance.

Q. Did the ancients authorize the resistance of insult with insult?

A. Yes; but Jesus prohibited this. A Christian has under no condition the right to deprive of life or to subject to insult him who does evil to his neighbour.

Q. May a man kill or maim another in self-defence?

A. No.

Q. May he enter a court with a complaint, to have his insulter punished?

A. No; for what he is doing through others, he is in reality doing in his own person.

Q. May he fight with an army against enemies, or against domestic rebels?

A. Of course not. He cannot take any part in war or warlike preparations. He cannot use death-dealing arms. He cannot resist injury with injury, no matter whether he be alone or with others, through himself or through others.

Q. May he choose or fit out military men for the government?

A. He can do nothing of the kind, if he wishes to be true to Christ's law.

Q. May he voluntarily give money, to aid the government, which is supported by military forces, capital punishment, and violence in general?

A. No, if the money is not intended for some special object, just in itself, where the aim and means are good.

Q. May he pay taxes to such a government?

A. No; he must not voluntarily pay the taxes, but he must also not resist their collection. The taxes imposed by the government are collected independently of the will of the subjects. It is impossible to resist the collection, without having recourse to violence; but a Christian must not use violence, and so he must give up his property to the violence which is exerted by the powers.

Q. May a Christian vote at elections and take part in a court or in the government?

A. No; the participation in elections, in the court, or in the government, is a participation in governmental violence.

Q. In what does the chief significance of the doctrine of non-resistance consist?

A. In that it alone makes it possible to tear the evil out by the root, both out of one's own heart and out of the neighbour's heart. This doctrine forbids doing that by which evil is perpetuated and multiplied. He who attacks another and insults him, engenders in another the sentiment of hatred, the root of all evil. To offend another, because he offended us, for the specious reason of removing an evil, means to repeat an evil deed, both against him and against ourselves, – to beget, or at least to free, to encourage, the very demon whom we claim we wish to expel. Satan cannot be driven out by Satan, untruth cannot be cleansed by untruth, and evil cannot be vanquished by evil.

True non-resistance is the one true resistance to evil. It kills and finally destroys the evil sentiment.

Q. But, if the idea of the doctrine is right, is it practicable?

A. It is as practicable as any good prescribed by the Law of God. The good cannot under all circumstances be executed without self-renunciation, privation, suffering, and, in extreme cases, without the loss of life itself. But he who values life more than the fulfilment of God's will is already dead to the one true life. Such a man, in trying to save his life, shall lose it. Besides, in general, where non-resistance costs the sacrifice of one life, or the sacrifice of some essential good of life, resistance costs thousands of such sacrifices.

Non-resistance preserves, resistance destroys.

It is incomparably safer to act justly than unjustly; to bear an insult than to resist it with violence, – it is safer even in relation to the present life. If all men did not resist evil with evil, the world would be blessed.

Q. But if only a few shall act thus, what will become of them?

A. If only one man acted thus, and all the others agreed to crucify him, would it not be more glorious for him to die in the triumph of non-resisting love, praying for his enemies, than to live wearing the crown of Cæsar, bespattered with the blood of the slain? But one or thousands who have firmly determined not to resist evil with evil, whether among the enlightened or among savage neighbours, are much safer from violence than those who rely on violence. A robber, murderer, deceiver, will more quickly leave them alone than those who resist with weapons. They who take the sword perish with the sword, and those who seek peace, who act in a friendly manner, inoffensively, who forget and forgive offences, for the most part enjoy peace or, if they die, die blessed.

Thus, if all kept the commandment of non-resistance, it is evident that there would be no offences, no evil deeds. If these formed a majority, they would establish the reign of love and goodwill, even toward the ill-disposed, by never resisting evil with evil, never using violence. If there were a considerable minority of these, they would have such a corrective, moral effect upon society that every cruel punishment would be abolished, and violence and enmity would be changed to peace and love. If there were but a small minority of them, they would rarely experience anything worse than the contempt of the world, and the world would in the meantime, without noticing it, and without feeling itself under obligation, become wiser and better from this secret influence. And if, in the very worst case, a few members of the minority should be persecuted to death, these men, dying for the truth, would leave behind them their teaching, which is already sanctified by their martyr's death.

Peace be with all who seek peace, and all-conquering love be the imperishable inheritance of every soul, which voluntarily submits to the Law of Christ: "Resist not evil." In the course of fifty years, Ballou wrote and edited books dealing mainly with the question of non-resistance to evil. In these works, which are beautiful in their lucidity of thought and elegance of expression, the question is discussed from every possible side. He establishes the obligatoriness of this commandment for every Christian who professes the Bible as a divine revelation. He adduces all the customary retorts

to the commandment of non-resistance, both from the Old Testament and from the New, as, for example, the expulsion from the temple, and so forth, and all these are overthrown; he shows, independently of Scripture, the practical wisdom of this rule, and adduces all the objections which are usually made to it, and meets all these objections. Thus one chapter of a work of his treats of non-resistance to evil in exclusive cases, and here he acknowledges that, if there were cases when the application of non-resistance to evil were impossible, this would prove that the rule is altogether untenable. In adducing these special cases, he proves that it is precisely in them that the application of this rule is necessary and rational. There is not a single side of the question, either for his followers or for his adversaries, which is not investigated in these works. I say all this, in order to show the unquestionable interest which such works ought to have for men who profess Christianity, and that, therefore, one would think Ballou's activity ought to have been known, and the thoughts expressed by him ought to have been accepted or refuted; but there has been nothing of the kind.

The activity of Garrison the father, with his foundation of a society of non-resistants and his declaration, convinced me even more than my relations with the Quakers, that the departure of state Christianity from Christ's law about non-resistance to evil is something that has been observed and pointed out long ago, and that men have without cessation worked to arraign it. Ballou's activity still more confirmed this fact to me. But the fate of Garrison and especially of Ballou, who is not known to any one, in spite of his fifty years of stubborn and constant work in one and the same direction, has also confirmed to me the other fact, that there exists some kind of unexpressed but firm understanding as to passing all such attempts in silence.

Ballou died in August, 1890, and his obituary was given in an American periodical with a Christian tendency (*Religio-Philosophical Journal*, August 23d).

In this eulogistic obituary it says that Ballou was a spiritual guide of a community, that he delivered between eight and nine thousand sermons, married one thousand pairs, and wrote about five hundred articles, but not a word is said about the aim to which he devoted all his life, – the word "non-resistance" is not even used.

Like all that which the Quakers have been preaching for two hundred years, like the activity of Garrison the father, the foundation of his society and periodical, and his declaration, so Ballou's whole activity does not seem to have existed at all.

A striking example of such an ingloriousness of writings intended to elucidate non-resistance to evil, and to arraign those who do not recognize this commandment, is found in the fate of the book by the Bohemian Chelcický, which has but lately become known and has so far not yet been printed.

Soon after the publication of my book in German, I received a letter from a professor of the Prague University, which informed me of the existence of a still unpublished work by the Bohemian Chelcický, of the fifteenth century, by the name of *The Drawnet of Faith*. In this work, as the professor wrote me, Chelcický about four centuries ago expressed the same view in regard to the true and the false Christianity, which I had expressed in my work, *My Religion*. The professor wrote to me that Chelcický's work was for the first time to be published in Bohemian in the periodical of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. As I was unable to procure the work itself, I tried to become acquainted with what was known of Chelcický, and such information I got from a German book sent me by the same Prague professor, and from Pýpin's "History of Bohemian Literature." This is what Pýpin says:

"*The Drawnet of Faith* is that teaching of Christ which is to draw man out from the dark depths of the sea of life and its untruths. True faith consists in believing in God's words; but now there has come a time when men consider the true faith to be heresy, and so reason must show wherein the true faith consists, if one does not know it. Darkness has concealed it from men, and they do not know Christ's true law.

"To explain this law, Chelcický points out the original structure of Christian society, which, he says, is now regarded as rank heresy by the Roman Church.

"This primitive church was his own ideal of a social structure, based on equality, freedom, and brotherhood. Christianity, according to Chelcický, still treasures these principles, and all that is necessary is, that society should return to its pure teaching, and then any other order, in which kings and popes are needed, would seem superfluous: in everything the law of love alone is sufficient.

"Historically Chelcický refers the fall of Christianity to the times of Constantine the Great, whom Pope Sylvester introduced into Christianity with all the pagan customs and life. Constantine, in his turn, invested the Pope with worldly wealth and power. Since then both powers have been aiding one another and have striven after external glory. Doctors and masters and the clergy have begun to care only for the subjugation of the whole world to their dominion, have armed men against one another for the purpose of murdering and plundering, and have completely destroyed Christianity in faith and in life. Chelcický absolutely denies the right to wage war and administer capital punishment; every warrior and even 'knight' is only an oppressor, malefactor, and murderer."

The same, except for some biographical details and excerpts from Chelcický's correspondence, is said in the German book.

Having thus learned the essence of Chelcický's teaching, I with much greater impatience waited for the appearance of *The Drawnet of Faith* in the journal of the Academy. But a year, two, three years passed, and the book did not appear. Only in 1888 I learned that the printing of the book, which had been begun, had come to a stop. I got the proof-sheets of as much as had been printed, and I read the book. The book is in every respect remarkable.

The contents are quite correctly rendered by Pýpin. Chelcický's fundamental idea is this, that Christianity, having united with the power in the time of Constantine and having continued to develop under these conditions, has become absolutely corrupt and has ceased to be Christianity. The title "*The Drawnet of Faith*," was given by Chelcický to his work, because, taking for his motto the verse of the Gospel about calling the disciples to become fishers of men, Chelcický, continuing this comparison, says, "Christ by means of His disciples caught in His drawnet of faith the whole world, but the larger fish, tearing the net, jumped out of it, and through the holes, which these larger fish had made, all the others went away, and the net was left almost empty."

The large fish that broke through the net are the rulers, emperors, popes, kings, who, in not renouncing their power, did not accept Christianity, but its semblance only.

Chelcický taught what has been taught until the present by the Mennonites and Quakers, and what in former years was taught by the Bogomils, Paulicians, and many others. He teaches that Christianity, which demands from its followers meekness, humility, kindness, forgiveness of sins, the offering of the other cheek when one cheek has been smitten, love of enemies, is incompatible with violence, which forms an indispensable condition of power.

A Christian, according to Chelcický's interpretation, can not only not be a chief or a soldier, but cannot even take part in the government, be a merchant or even a landowner; he can be only an artisan or an agriculturist.

This book is one of the extremely few that have survived the auto-da-fés of books in which the official Christianity is arraigned. All such books, which are called heretical, have been burned together with the authors, so that there are very few ancient works which arraign the departure of official Christianity, and so this book is especially interesting.

But besides being interesting, no matter how we look upon it, this book is one of the most remarkable productions of thoughts, as judged by the depth of its contents, and the wonderful force and beauty of the popular language, and its antiquity. And yet this book has for more than four centuries remained unprinted, and continues to be unknown, except to learned specialists.

One would think that all these kinds of works, by the Quakers, and Garrison, and Ballou, and Chelcický, which assert and prove, on the basis of the Gospel, that our world comprehends

Christ's teaching falsely, ought to rouse interest, agitation, discussions, in the midst of the pastors and of the flock.

Works of this kind, which touch on the essence of the Christian teaching, ought, it seems, to be analyzed and recognized as true, or to be rejected and overthrown.

But nothing of the kind has happened. One and the same thing is repeated with all these works. People of the most different views, both those who believe and, what is most surprising, those who are unbelieving liberals, seem to have an agreement to pass them stubbornly in silence, and all that has been done by men to elucidate the true meaning of Christ's teaching remains unknown or forgotten.

But still more startling is the ingloriousness of two works, of which I learned also in connection with the appearance of my book. These are Dymond's book *On War*, published for the first time in London, in 1824, and Daniel Musser's book *On Non-Resistance*, written in 1864. The ignorance about these two books is particularly remarkable, because, to say nothing of their worth, both books treat not so much of the theory as of the practical application of the theory to life, of the relation of Christianity to military service, which is particularly important and interesting now, in connection with the universal liability to do military service.

People will, perhaps, ask: "What are the duties of a subject, who believes that war is incompatible with his religion, but of whom the government demands a participation in military service?"

It seems that this is a very living question, one, the answer to which is particularly important in connection with the military service of the present time. All, or a vast majority of men, – Christians, – all males, are called on to perform military service. What must a man, as a Christian, answer in reply to this demand? Dymond's answer is as follows:

"It is his duty, mildly and temperately, yet firmly, to refuse to serve.

"There are some persons, who, without any determinate process of reasoning, appear to conclude that responsibility for national measures attaches solely to those who direct them; that it is the business of governments to consider what is good for the community, and that, in these cases, the duty of the subject is merged in the will of the sovereign. Considerations like these are, I believe, often voluntarily permitted to become opiates of the conscience. 'I have no part,' it is said, 'in the councils of the government, and am not therefore responsible for its crimes.' We are, indeed, not responsible for the crimes of our rulers, but we are responsible for our own; and the crimes of our rulers are our own, if, whilst we believe them to be crimes, we promote them by our coöperation.

"But those who suppose that obedience in all things is required, or that responsibility in political affairs is transferred from the subject to the sovereign, reduce themselves to a great dilemma.

"It is to say that we must resign our conduct and our consciences to the will of others, and act wickedly or well, as their good or evil may preponderate, without merit for virtue, or responsibility for crime."

What is remarkable is this, that precisely the same is expressed in the instruction to the soldiers, which they are made to learn by rote: it says there that only the general is responsible for the consequences of his command. But this is not true. A man cannot shift the responsibility for his acts. And this may be seen from what follows:

"If the government direct you to fire your neighbour's property, or to throw him over a precipice, will you obey?⁵ If you will not, there is an end of the argument, for if you may reject its authority in one instance, where is the limit to rejection? There is no rational limit but that which is assigned by Christianity, and that is both rational and practicable.

⁵ Tolstóy's translation from the English, which is generally loose, here departs entirely from the text. Tolstóy writes: "If a chief direct you to kill your neighbour's child, or your father, or your mother, will you obey?"

"We think, then, that it is the business of every man, who believes that war is inconsistent with our religion, respectfully, but steadfastly, to refuse to engage in it. Let such as these remember that an honourable and an awful duty is laid upon them. It is upon their fidelity, so far as human agency is concerned, that the cause of peace is suspended. Let them be willing to avow their opinions and to defend them. Neither let them be contented with words, if more than words, if suffering also, is required. If you believe that Jesus Christ has prohibited slaughter, let not the opinion or the commands of a world induce you to join in it. By this 'steady and determinate pursuit of virtue,' the benediction which attaches to those who hear the sayings of God and do them, will rest upon you, and the time will come when even the world will honour you, as contributors to the work of human reformation."

Musser's book is called *Non-Resistance Asserted; or, Kingdom of Christ and Kingdom of This World Separated*, 1864.⁶

The book is devoted to the same question, which it analyzes in relation with the demand made by the government of the United States on its citizens as regards military service during that Civil War, and it has the same contemporary importance, in that it analyzes the question as to how and under what conditions men must and can refuse to do military service. In the introduction the author says:

"It is well known that in the United States there are many people who consciously deny war. They are called 'non-resistant' or 'defenceless' Christians. These Christians refuse to defend their country or to bear arms, or to engage, at the request of the government, in war against its enemies. Until now this religious cause has been respected by the government, and those who professed it were excused from service. But with the beginning of our civil war public opinion has been wrought up by this state of affairs. Naturally, people who consider it their duty to bear all the burdens and perils of a military life for the defence of their country feel harsh toward those who for a long time have with them enjoyed the protection and the advantages of the government, but in time of necessity and danger do not wish to share in bearing the labours and dangers in its defence. It is also natural for the condition of such men to be considered irrational, monstrous, and suspicious.

"Many orators and writers," says the author, "have raised their voice against this state and have tried to prove the injustice of non-resistance from common sense and from Scripture; and this is quite natural, and in many cases these authors are right, – they are right in relation to those persons who, declining the labours connected with military service, do not decline the advantages which they receive from the governments, – but they are not right in relation to the principle of non-resistance itself."

First of all the author proves the obligatoriness of the rule of non-resistance for every Christian in that it is clear and that it is given to a Christian beyond any possibility of misinterpretation. "Judge yourselves whether it is right to obey man more than God," said Peter and John. Similarly every man who wants to be a Christian must act in relation to the demand that he should go to war, since Christ has told him, "Resist not evil with violence."

With this the author considers the question as to principle itself completely solved. The author analyzes in detail the other question as to whether persons, who do not decline the advantages which are obtained through the violence of government, have a right to refuse to do military service, and comes to the conclusion that a Christian, who follows Christ's law and refuses to go to war, can just as little take part in any governmental affairs, – either in courts or in elections, – nor can he in private matters have recourse to power, police or court. Then the book proceeds to analyze the relation of the Old Testament to the New, – the significance of government for non-Christians;

⁶ A thorough search through bibliographies, catalogues, and libraries has failed to reveal such a book or such an author, and as Tolstoy speaks above of the book as being written, it may be that Tolstoy had a manuscript before him.

there are offered objections to the doctrine of non-resistance, and these are refuted. The author concludes his book with the following:

"Christ chose His disciples in the world," he says. "They do not expect any worldly goods or worldly happiness, but, on the contrary, everlasting life. The spirit in which they live makes them satisfied and happy in every situation. If the world tolerates them, they are always satisfied. But if the world will not leave them in peace, they will go elsewhere, since they are wanderers on the earth and have no definite place of abode. They consider that the dead can bury the dead, – they need but one thing, and that is to follow their teacher."

Without touching the question whether the duty of a Christian in relation to war, as established in these two books, is correct or not, it is impossible not to see the practical importance and urgency of the solution of this question.

There are some people, – hundreds of thousands of Quakers, – and all our Spirit Wrestlers and Milkers, and people belonging to no definite sects, who assert that violence – and so military service – is not compatible with Christianity, and therefore every year several recruits in Russia refuse to do military service on the basis of their religious convictions. What does the government do? Does it excuse them? No. Does it compel them to serve, and, in case of a refusal, punish them? No. In 1818 the government acted as follows. Here is an excerpt, which is almost unknown in Russia, from a diary by N. N. Muravév-Kárski, which was not sanctioned by the censor.

"Tiflis, October 2, 1818.

"In the morning the commandant told me that lately five manorial peasants from the Government of Támbov had been sent to Georgia. These men had been sent to the army, but they refused to serve; they have been flogged several times and have been sent between the rows, but they gladly undergo the most cruel torments and are prepared for death, if only they can avoid serving. 'Send us away,' they say, 'and do not touch us; we shall not touch any one. All men are equal and the Tsar is just such a man as we are. Why should we pay him tribute? Why should I subject my life to danger in order to kill in war a man who has done me no wrong? You may cut us into small pieces, but we will not change our ideas, we will not put on the military cloak, and will not eat rations. He who will pity us will give us an alms, but we have nothing belonging to the Crown and we want nothing.' Such are the words of these peasants, who assert that there is a large number like them in Russia. They have four times been taken before the Committee of Ministers, and it was finally decided to refer the matter to the Tsar, who commanded that they be sent to Georgia to mend their ways, and ordered the commander-in-chief to report to him every month concerning the gradual success in turning these peasants to the proper ideas."

It is not known how this improvement ended, just as nothing is known of the whole episode, which was kept a profound secret.

Thus the government acted seventy-five years ago, – thus it has acted in the vast majority of cases, which are always cautiously concealed from the people. Thus it acts even at present, except in relation to the German Mennonites, who live in the Government of Khersón, for their refusal to do military service is heeded and they are made to serve their time in connection with forestry work.

In the late cases of refusal to do military service in consequence of religious convictions, other than those of the Mennonites, the authorities have acted as follows:

At first they use all means of violence employed in our time for the purpose of "mending" them and bringing them back to "the proper ideas," and the whole matter is kept a profound secret. I know that in the case of one man in Moscow, who in 1884 refused to serve, they wrote up

voluminous documents two months after his refusal, and these were kept in the ministry as the greatest secret.

They generally begin by sending the one who refuses to the priests, who, to their shame be it said, always admonish the person refusing. But since the admonition, in the name of Christ, to renounce Christ is generally fruitless, the refusing person is after the admonition by the clergy sent to the gendarmes. The gendarmes, finding nothing of a political nature in the case, generally return him, and then the refusing person is sent to the learned, to the physicians, and into the insane asylum. In all these commitments the refuser, who is deprived of his liberty, undergoes all kinds of humiliations and sufferings, like a condemned criminal. (This was repeated in four cases.) The physicians dismiss the refuser from the insane asylum, and then begin all kinds of secret, cunning measures, in order not to dismiss the refuser and thus encourage others to refuse like him, and at the same time not to leave him amidst the soldiers, lest the soldiers might find out from him that the levy for military service does not at all take place in accordance with God's law, as they are assured, but contrary to it.

The most convenient thing for the government to do would be to have the refuser executed, beaten to death with sticks, as they used to do of old, or executed in some other manner. But it is impossible openly to execute a man for being true to a teaching which we all profess, and it is equally impossible to let a man alone, who refuses to serve. And so the government tries either through suffering to compel the man to renounce Christ, or in some way imperceptibly to get rid of the man, without having him publicly executed, – in some way to conceal this man's act and the man himself from other people. And so there begin all kinds of devices and cunning and tortures of this man. Either he is sent to some outlying region, or he is provoked to commit some act of insubordination, and then he is tried for breach of discipline and is locked up in prison, in a disciplinary battalion, where he is freely tortured in secret, or he is declared insane and is locked up in an insane asylum. Thus one man was sent to Tashként, that is, as though he were transferred to the Tashként army, another to Omsk, a third was tried for insubordination and sent to prison, and a fourth was put into a lunatic asylum.

Everywhere the same is repeated. Not only the government, but also the majority of liberals, of freethinkers, as though by agreement, carefully turn away from everything which has been said, written, and done by men to show the incompatibility of violence in its most terrible, rude, and lurid form, in the form of militarism, that is, the readiness to kill anybody, with the teaching, not only of Christianity, but even of humanitarianism, which society pretends to be professing.

Thus the information which I received concerning the extent to which the true significance of Christ's teaching has been elucidated and is being elucidated more and more, and concerning the attitude which the highest ruling classes, not only in Russia, but also in Europe and in America, take toward this elucidation and execution of the teaching, convinced me that in these ruling classes there existed a consciously hostile relation toward true Christianity, which found its expression mainly in the silence observed concerning all its manifestations.

II

The same impression of a desire to conceal, to pass in silence, what I attempted so carefully to express in my book, has been produced on me by the criticisms upon it.

When my book appeared, it was, as I had expected, prohibited, and according to the law it ought to have been burned. But, instead of being burned, it was distributed among the officials, and it was disseminated in a large number of written copies and lithographic reprints, and in translations printed abroad. Very soon there appeared criticisms upon the book, not only by the clergy, but also by the laity, which the government not only sanctioned, but even encouraged, so that the refutation of the book, which was assumed to be unknown to any one, was made a theme for theological essays in the academies.

The critics upon my books, both the Russian and the foreign critics, can be divided into two classes: into the religious critics, – people who consider themselves to be believers, – and lay critics, who are freethinkers.

I shall begin with the first:

In my book I accuse the church teachers of teaching contrary to Christ's commandments, which are clearly and definitely expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, and especially contrary to the commandment about non-resistance to evil, thus depriving Christ's teaching of all significance. The church teachers recognize the Sermon on the Mount with the commandment about non-resistance to evil as a divine revelation, and so, if they have found it necessary to write about my book at all, they ought, it would seem, first of all to answer this chief point of accusation and say outright whether they consider the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and of the commandment about non-resistance to evil obligatory for a Christian, or not, – and they must not answer it as this is generally done, that is, by saying that, although on the one hand it cannot properly be denied, on the other it cannot be affirmed, the more so that, and so forth, – but must answer it just as the question is put by me in my book: did Christ actually demand from His disciples the fulfilment of what He taught in the Sermon on the Mount? and so, can a Christian, remaining a Christian, go to court, taking part in it and condemning people, or seeking in it defence by means of violence, or can he not? Can a Christian, still remaining a Christian, take part in the government, using violence against his neighbours, or not? And the chief question, which now, with the universal military service, stands before all men, – can a Christian, remaining a Christian, contrary to Christ's injunction, make any promises as to future acts, which are directly contrary to the teaching, and, taking part in military service, prepare himself for the murder of men and commit it?

The questions are put clearly and frankly, and, it would seem, they ought to be answered clearly and frankly. But nothing of the kind has been done in all the criticisms upon my book, just as nothing of the kind has been done in the case of all those arraignments of the church teachers for departing from Christ's law, with which history is filled since the time of Constantine.

Very much has been said in reference to my book about how incorrectly I interpret this or that passage in the Gospel, how I err in not acknowledging the Trinity, the redemption, and the immortality of the soul; very much has been said, but this one thing, which for every Christian forms the chief, essential question of life: how to harmonize what was clearly expressed in the teacher's words and is clearly expressed in the heart of every one of us, – the teaching about forgiveness, humility, renunciation, and love of all men, of our neighbours and of our enemies, – with the demand of military violence exerted against the men of one's own nation or another nation.

Everything which may be called semblances of answers to this question may be reduced to the five following divisions. I have tried in this respect to collect everything I could, not only in reference to the criticisms upon my book, but also in reference to what has been written upon the subject in former times.

The first, the rudest way of answering, consists in the bold assertion that violence does not contradict Christ's teaching, and that it is permitted and even prescribed by the Old and the New Testament.

Assertions of this kind issue for the most part from people high up in the governmental or ecclesiastic hierarchy, who are, therefore, quite convinced that no one will dare to contradict their assertions, and that if one actually dared to do so, they would not hear these objections. These men have, in consequence of their intoxication with their power, for the most part to such an extent lost the concept of what that Christianity is, in the name of which they occupy their places, that everything of a Christian nature in Christianity presents itself to them as sectarian; but everything which in the writings of the Old and the New Testament may be interpreted in an anti-Christian and pagan sense, they consider to be the foundation of Christianity. In favour of their assertion that Christianity does not contradict violence, these men with the greatest boldness generally bring forward the most offensive passages from the Old and the New Testament, and interpret them in the most non-Christian manner: the execution of Ananias and Sapphira, the execution of Simon Magus, and so forth. They adduce all those words of Christ which may be interpreted as a justification of cruelty, such as the expulsion from the temple, "It shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom, than for that city," and so forth.

According to the concepts of these men, the Christian government is not in the least obliged to be guided by the spirit of humility, forgiveness of offences, and love of our enemies.

It is useless to refute such an assertion, because the men who assert this refute themselves, or rather, turn away from Christ, inventing their own Christ and their own Christianity in place of Him in whose name the church exists and also the position which they occupy in it. If all men knew that the church preaches Christ punishing, and not forgiving, and warring, no one would be believing in this church, and there would be no one to prove what it is proving.

The second method is a little less rude. It consists in asserting that, although Christ really taught to offer one's cheek and give up a shirt, and this is a very high moral demand, there are malefactors in the world, and if these are not curbed by the exercise of force, the whole world and all good men will perish. This proof I found for the first time in John Chrysostom and I pointed out its incorrectness in my book, *My Religion*.

This argument is ungrounded, because, in the first place, if we allow ourselves to recognize any men as special malefactors (Raca), we thus destroy the whole meaning of the Christian teaching, according to which we are all equal and brothers, as the sons of one heavenly Father; in the second place, because, even if God permitted the exertion of violence against malefactors, it is absolutely impossible to find that safe and indubitable sign by which a malefactor may be unerringly told from one who is not, and so every man, or society of men, would recognize another as a malefactor, which is the case now; in the third place, because even if it were possible unerringly to tell malefactors from those who are not malefactors, it would still not be possible in a Christian society to execute, or maim, or lock up these malefactors, because in Christian society there would be no one to do this, because every Christian, as a Christian, is enjoined not to use violence against a malefactor.

The third method of answering is still shrewder than the previous one. It consists in asserting that, although the commandment of non-resistance to evil is obligatory for a Christian when the evil is directed against him personally, it ceases to be obligatory when the evil is directed against his neighbours, and that then a Christian is not only not obliged to fulfil the commandments, but is also obliged in the defence of his neighbours, contrary to the commandment, to use violence against the violators.

This assertion is quite arbitrary, and in the whole of Christ's teaching no confirmation of such an interpretation can be found. Such an interpretation is not only a limitation of the commandment, but a direct negation and annihilation of it. If any man has a right to use violence when another

is threatened by danger, then the question as to the use of violence reduces itself to the question of defining what constitutes a danger for another person. But if my private judgment decides the question of danger for another, then there does not exist such a case of violence that it could not be explained on the basis of a danger with which another is threatened. Wizards were executed and burned, aristocrats and Girondists were executed, and so were their enemies, because those who were in power considered them to be dangerous for others.

If this important limitation, which radically undermines the meaning of the commandment, entered Christ's mind, there ought somewhere to be mention made of it. But in all the preaching and the life of the teacher there is not only no such limitation, but, on the contrary, there is expressed a particular caution against such a false and offensive limitation, which destroys the commandment. The mistake and the blunder of such a limitation is with particular clearness shown in the Gospel in connection with the judgment of Caiaphas, who made this very limitation. He recognized that it was not good to execute innocent Jesus, but he saw in Him danger, not for himself, but for the whole nation, and so he said: "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." And more clearly still was the negation of such a limitation expressed in the words said to Peter when he attempted with violence to resist the evil which was directed against Jesus (Matt. xxvi. 52). Peter was not defending himself, but his beloved and divine teacher. And Christ directly forbade him to do so, saying that he who takes the sword shall perish with the sword.

Besides, the justification of violence used against a neighbour for the sake of defending another man against worse violence is always incorrect, because in using violence against an evil which is not yet accomplished, it is impossible to know which evil will be greater, – whether the evil of my violence or of that against which I wish to defend my neighbour. We execute a criminal, thus freeing society from him, and we are positively unable to tell whether the criminal would not have changed on the morrow and whether our execution is not a useless cruelty. We lock up a man whom we suppose to be a dangerous member of society, but beginning with to-morrow this man may cease to be dangerous, and his incarceration is futile. I see that a man whom I know to be a robber is pursuing a girl, and I have a gun in my hand, – I kill the robber and save the girl; the robber has certainly been killed or wounded, but it is unknown to me what would happen if that were not the case. What an enormous amount of evil must take place, as it actually does, as the result of arrogating to ourselves the right to prevent an evil that may occur! Ninety-nine hundredths of the evil of the world, from the Inquisition to dynamite bombs and the executions and sufferings of tens of thousands of so-called political criminals, are based on this reflection.

The fourth, still more refined answer to the question as to how a Christian should act toward Christ's commandment of non-resistance to evil consists in asserting that the commandment of non-resistance to evil is not denied by them, but is accepted like any other; but that they do not ascribe to this commandment any special exclusive significance, as the sectarians do. To ascribe to this commandment an invariable condition of Christian life, as do Garrison, Ballou, Dymond, the Quakers, the Mennonites, the Shakers, and as did the Moravian brothers, the Waldenses, Albigenses, Bogomils, Paulicians, is one-sided sectarianism. This commandment has neither more nor less significance than all the others, and a man who in his weakness transgresses any one of the commandments about non-resistance does not cease to be a Christian, provided he believes correctly. This subterfuge is very clever, and men who wish to be deceived are easily deceived by it. The subterfuge consists in reducing the direct conscious negation of the commandment to an accidental violation of the same. But we need only compare the relation of the church teachers to this commandment and to others, which they actually recognize, in order that we may convince ourselves that the relation of the church teachers to the commandments which they recognize is quite different from their relation to this one.

They actually recognize the commandment against fornication, and so never, under any condition, admit that fornication is not an evil. The preachers of the church never point out any cases when the commandment against fornication ought to be broken, and they always teach that we must avoid the offences which lead to the temptation of fornication. But this is not the case with the commandment about non-resistance. All the church preachers know cases when this commandment may be broken. And thus they teach men. And they not only do not teach how to avoid these offences, of which the chief one is the oath, but themselves commit them. The church preachers never and under no condition preach the violation of any other commandment; but in relation to the commandment of non-resistance they teach outright that this prohibition must not be understood in too direct a sense, and not only that this commandment must not be carried out at all times, but that there are conditions, situations, when directly the opposite should be done, that is, that we should judge, wage war, execute. Thus, in reference to the commandment about non-resistance to evil, they in the majority of cases preach how not to fulfil it. The fulfilment of this commandment, they say, is very difficult and is characteristic only of perfection. But how can it help but be difficult, when its breach is not only not prohibited, but is also directly encouraged, when they directly bless the courts, prisons, guns, cannon, armies, battles? Consequently it is not true that this commandment is recognized by the church preachers as of equal significance with the other commandments. The church preachers simply do not recognize it, and only because they do not dare to confess it, try to conceal their failure to recognize it.

Such is the fourth method of answers.

The fifth method, the most refined, most popular, and most powerful one, consists in begging the question, in making it appear as though the question had long ago been decided by some one in an absolutely clear and satisfactory manner, and as though it were not worth while to speak of it. This method is employed by more or less cultivated ecclesiastic writers, that is, such as feel the laws of logic to be obligatory for them. Knowing that the contradiction which exists between Christ's teaching, which we profess in words, and the whole structure of our life cannot be solved with words, and that, by touching it, we can only make it more obvious, they with greater or lesser agility get around it, making it appear that the question about the connection of Christianity with violence has been decided or does not exist at all.⁷

The majority of the ecclesiastic critics of my book employ this method. I could adduce dozens of such criticisms, in which without exception one and the same thing is repeated: they speak of everything but the chief subject of the book. As a characteristic example of such criticisms, I shall quote an article by the famous, refined English writer and preacher, Farrar, a great master, like many learned theologians, of evasions and reticence. This article was printed in the American periodical, *Forum*, in October, 1888.

Having conscientiously given a short review of my book, Farrar says:

"Tolstóy came to the conclusion that a coarse deceit was palmed upon the world when these words were held by civil society to be compatible with war, courts of justice, capital punishment, divorce, oaths, national prejudice, and indeed with most of the institutions of civil and social life. He now believes that the kingdom of God would come if all men kept these five commandments, ... (1) Live in peace with all men; (2) be pure; (3) take no oaths; (4) never resist evil; (5) renounce national distinctions.

⁷ I know but one piece of writing, not a criticism in the strict sense of the word, but an article which treats the same subject, and which has my book in view, that departs from this common definition. It is Tróitski's pamphlet (Kazán) *The Sermon on the Mount*. The author obviously recognizes Christ's teaching in its real significance. He says that the commandment about non-resistance to evil means what it does, and the same is true of the commandment about swearing; he does not deny, as others do, the significance of Christ's teaching, but unfortunately he does not make from this recognition those inevitable deductions, which in our life beg for recognition in connection with such a comprehension of Christ's teaching. If it is not right to resist evil and to swear, every man will naturally ask: "How about military service?" And to this question the author gives no answer, though an answer is demanded. And if it cannot be answered, it is best not to speak at all, because silence produces error. —*Author's Note*.

"Tolstóy," he says, "rejects the divine inspiration of the Old Testament and of the epistles; he rejects all the dogmas of the church, that of the atonement by blood, that of the Trinity, that of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles ... and recognizes only the words and commandments of Christ.

"Is this interpretation of Christ a true one?" he asks. "Are all men bound, or is any man bound, to act as Tolstóy has taught, that is, to fulfil the five commandments of Christ?"

One just hopes that in reply to this essential question, which alone could have urged the man to write an article on the book, he will say that this interpretation of Christ's teaching is correct, or that it is not correct, and so will prove why, and will give another, a correct interpretation to the words which I interpret incorrectly. But nothing of the kind is done. Farrar only expresses his conviction that, "though actuated by the noblest sincerity, Tolstóy has been misled by partial and one-sided interpretations of the meaning of the Gospel and the mind and will of Christ."

No explanation is given as to what this error consists in, but all there is said, is:

"To enter into the proof of this is impossible in this article, for I have already exceeded the space at my command."

And he concludes with an easy mind:

"Meanwhile the reader who feels troubled lest it should be his duty also to forsake all conditions of his life, and to take up the position and work of a common labourer, may rest for the present on the principle, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. With few and rare exceptions," he continues, "the whole of Christendom, from the days of the apostles down to our own, has come to the firm conclusion that it was the object of Christ to lay down great eternal principles, but not disturb the bases and revolutionize the institutions of all human society, which themselves rest on divine sanction as well as on inevitable conditions. Were it my object to prove how untenable is the doctrine of communism, based by Tolstóy upon the divine paradoxes (*sic!*), which can be interpreted on only historical principles in accordance with the whole method of the teaching of Jesus, it would require an ampler canvas than I have here at my disposal."

What a misfortune, – he has not any space! And, strange to say, space has been lacking for fifteen centuries, to prove that Christ, whom we profess, said something different from what He said. They could prove it, if they only wanted to. However, it does not pay to prove what everybody knows. It is enough to say: "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum*."

And such are, without exception, all the criticisms of the cultivated believers, who, therefore, do not understand the perilousness of their position. The only way out for them is the hope that, by using the authority of the church, of antiquity, of holiness, they may be able to confuse the reader and draw him away from the thought of reading the Gospel for himself and of considering the question with his own mind. And in this they are successful. To whom, indeed, will it occur that all that which with such assurance and solemnity is repeated from century to century by all these archdeacons, bishops, archbishops, most holy synods, and Popes, is a base lie and calumny, which they foist on Christ in order to secure the money which they need for the purpose of leading a life of pleasure, while sitting on the backs of others, – a lie and a calumny, which is so obvious, especially now that the only possibility of continuing this lie consists in frightening men into belief by their assurance, their unscrupulousness? It is precisely the same that of late years has taken place in the Recruiting Sessions: at the head of the table, with the Mirror of Laws upon it, and beneath the full-sized portrait of the emperor, sit dignified old officials in their regalia, conversing freely and unreservedly, noting down, commanding, calling out. Here also, with the cross over his breast and in silk vestments, with his gray hair falling down straight over his scapulary, stands an imposing old man, the priest, in front of the pulpit, on which lies a gold cross and a gold-trimmed Gospel.

Iván Petrón is called out. A young man steps out. He is poorly and dirtily dressed and looks frightened, and the muscles of his face tremble, and his fugitive eyes sparkle, and in a faltering voice, almost in a whisper, he says: "I – according to the law I, a Christian – I cannot –"

"What is he muttering there?" impatiently asks the presiding officer, half-closing his eyes and listening, as he raises his head from the book.

"Speak louder!" shouts to him the colonel with the shining shoulder-straps.

"I – I – I – as a Christian – "

It finally turns out that the young man refuses to do military service, because he is a Christian.

"Talk no nonsense! Get your measure! Doctor, be so kind as to take his measure. Is he fit for the army?"

"He is."

"Reverend father, have him sworn in."

No one is confused; no one even pays any attention to what this frightened, pitiable young man is muttering.

"They all mutter something, but we have no time: we have to receive so many recruits."

The recruit wants to say something again.

"This is against Christ's law."

"Go, go, we know without you what is according to the law, – but you get out of here. Reverend father, admonish him. Next: Vasili Nikítin."

And the trembling youth is taken away. And to whom – whether the janitor, or Vasili Nikítin, who is being brought in, or any one else who witnessed this scene from the side – will it occur that those indistinct, short words of the youth, which were at once put out of court by the authorities, contain the truth, while those loud, solemn speeches of the self-possessed, calm officials and of the priest are a lie, a deception?

A similar impression is produced, not only by the articles of a Farrar but by all those solemn sermons, articles, and books, which appear on all sides, the moment the truth peeps out and arraigns the ruling lie. Immediately there begin long, clever, elegant conversations or writings about questions which touch closely upon the subject with a shrewd reticence concerning the question itself.

In this consists the fifth and most effective means for removing the contradiction in which the ecclesiastic Christianity has placed itself by professing Christ in words and denying His teaching in life, and teaching the same to others.

Those who justify themselves by the first method, asserting outright and rudely that Christ has permitted violence, – wars, murder, – withdraw themselves from Christ's teaching; those who defend themselves according to the second, the third, and the fourth methods get themselves entangled, and it is easy to point out their untruth; but these last, who do not discuss, who do not condescend to discuss, but hide themselves behind their greatness and make it appear that all this has been decided long ago by them, or by somebody else, and that it no longer is subject to any doubt, seem invulnerable, and they will be invulnerable so long as people will remain under the influence of hypnotic suggestion, which is induced in them by governments and churches, and will not shake it off.

Such was the attitude which the ecclesiastics, that is, those who profess Christ's faith, assumed toward me. Nor could they have acted otherwise: they are bound by the contradiction in which they live, – the faith in the divinity of the teacher and the unbelief in His clearest words, – from which they must in some way extricate themselves, and so it was not possible to expect from them any free opinion concerning the essence of the question, concerning that change in the lives of men which results from the application of Christ's teaching to the existing order. Such opinions I expected from the freethinking lay critics, who are in no way bound to Christ's teaching and who can look upon it without restraint. I expected that the freethinking writers would look upon Christ not only as the establisher of a religion of worship and personal salvation (as which the ecclesiastics understand him), but, to express myself in their language, as a reformer, who destroys

the old, and gives the new foundations of life, the reform of which is not yet accomplished, but continues until the present.

Such a view of Christ and His teaching results from my book, but, to my surprise, out of the large number of criticisms upon my book, there was *not one*, either Russian or foreign, which treated the subject from the same side from which it is expounded in my book, that is, which looked upon Christ's teaching as a philosophical, moral, and social doctrine (again to speak in the language of the learned). This was not the case in a single criticism.

The Russian lay critics, who understood my book in such a way that all its contents reduced themselves to non-resistance to evil, and who understood the teaching about non-resistance to evil itself (apparently for convenience of refutation) as meaning that it prohibited any struggle against evil, furiously attacked this teaching and very successfully proved for the period of several years that Christ's teaching was incorrect, since it taught us not to resist evil. Their refutations of this supposed teaching of Christ were the more successful, since they knew in advance that their views could neither be overthrown nor corrected, because the censorship, having failed to sanction the book itself, did not sanction the articles in its defence either.

What is remarkable in connection with the matter is this, that with us, where not a word may be said about the Holy Scripture without a prohibition by the censorship, the clearly and directly expressed commandment of Matt. v. 39 has for several years been openly contorted, criticized, condemned, and ridiculed in all the periodicals.

The Russian lay critics, who evidently did not know all that had been done in the development of the question as to non-resistance to evil, and who at times even seemed to assume that I personally invented the rule of not resisting evil with violence, attacked the idea itself, rejecting and contorting it, and with much fervour advancing arguments which have long ago been analyzed from every side and rejected, proved that a man is obliged (with violence) to defend all the insulted and the oppressed, and that, therefore, the doctrine about not resisting evil with violence is immoral.

The whole significance of Christ's preaching presented itself to the Russian critics as though maliciously interfering with a certain activity, which was directed against what they at a given moment considered to be an evil, so that it turned out that the principle of not resisting evil with violence was attacked by two opposite camps, – by the conservatives, because this principle interfered with their activity of resisting the evil which was produced by the revolutionists, and with their persecutions and executions; and by the revolutionists, because this principle interfered with the resistance to the evil which was produced by the conservatives, and with the overthrow of the conservatives. The conservatives were provoked, because the doctrine of non-resistance to evil interfered with the energetic suppression of the revolutionary elements, who are likely to ruin the welfare of the nation; while the revolutionists were provoked, because the doctrine of non-resistance to evil interfered with the overthrow of the conservatives, who were ruining the well-being of the nation.

What is remarkable is, that the revolutionists attacked the principle of non-resistance, although it is most terrible and most dangerous for every despotism, because ever since the beginning of the world the opposite principle of the necessity of resisting evil with violence has been lying at the basis of all violence, from the Inquisition to the Schlüsselburg Fortress.

Besides, the Russian critics pointed out that the application to life of the commandment about non-resistance to evil would turn humanity away from the path of civilization, on which it was marching now; but the path of civilization, on which the European civilization is marching, is, in their opinion, the one on which all humanity must always march.

Such was the chief character of the Russian criticisms.

The foreign critics proceeded from the same bases, but their reviews of my book differed from those of the Russian critics not only in a lesser degree of irritability and a greater degree of culture, but also in the essence of the matter.

In discussing my book and the Gospel teaching in general, as it is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the foreign critics asserted that such a teaching is really not Christian (Christian in their opinion is Catholicism and Protestantism), and that the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount is only a series of very charming, impracticable reveries "*du charmant docteur*," as Renan used to say, which were good enough for the naïve and half-wild inhabitants of Galilee, who lived eighteen hundred years ago, and for the Russian peasants, Syutáev and Bondarév, and the Russian mystic, Tolstóy, but can in no way be applied to the high degree of European culture.

The foreign lay critics tried, in a refined manner, without giving me any offence, to let me know that my opinion that humanity can be guided by such a naïve teaching as the Sermon on the Mount is due partly to my ignorance, lack of acquaintance with history, lack of knowledge of all those vain attempts to realize in life the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, which have been made in history, and have led to nothing, thanks to ignorance concerning the whole significance of that high degree of culture on which European civilization now stands, with its Krupp guns, smokeless powder, the colonization of Africa, the government of Ireland, parliaments, journalism, strikes, constitutions, and Eiffel Tower.

Thus wrote Vogüé, and Leroy Beaulieu, and Matthew Arnold, and the American writer Savage, and Ingersoll, a popular American preacher of free thought, and many others.

"Christ's teaching is no good, because it does not harmonize with our industrial age," naïvely says Ingersoll, thus expressing with absolute precision and naïveté what the refined and cultured men of our time think about Christ's teaching. The teaching is no good for our industrial age, as though the existence of the industrial age is something sacred which must not and cannot be changed. It is something like what drunkards would do, if, in response to advice about how to get themselves into a sober state, they should reply that the advice is out of place in connection with their present alcoholic state.

The discussions of all the lay writers, both Russian and foreign, no matter how different their tone and the manner of their arguments may be, in reality reduce themselves to one and the same strange misunderstanding, namely, that Christ's teaching, one of the consequences of which is non-resistance to evil, is useless to us, because it demands that our life be changed.

Christ's teaching is useless, because, if it were put into practice, our life could not continue; in other words, – if we began to live well, as Christ has taught us, we could not continue to live badly, as we live and are accustomed to live. The question of non-resistance to evil is not discussed, and the very mention of the fact that the demand for non-resistance to evil enters into Christ's teaching is considered a sufficient proof of the inapplicability of the whole teaching.

And yet, it would seem, it is indispensable to point out some kind of a solution to this question, because it lies at the foundation of nearly all affairs which interest us.

The question consists in this: how are we to harmonize the conflicts of men, when some consider an evil what others consider to be good, and vice versa? And so, to consider that an evil which I consider an evil, although my adversary may consider it good, is no answer. There can be but two answers: either we have to find a true and indisputable criterion of what an evil is, or we must not resist evil with violence.

The first solution has been tried since the beginning of historical times, and, as we all know, has so far led to no satisfactory results.

The second answer, not to resist with violence what we consider evil, so long as we have found no common criterion, was proposed by Christ.

It may be found that Christ's answer is not correct: it may be possible to put in its place another, better answer, by finding a criterion which would indubitably and simultaneously for all define the evil; we may simply not recognize the essence of the question, as it is not recognized by the savage nations, – but it is impossible, as the learned critics of the Christian teaching do, to make it appear that such a question does not at all exist, or that the relegation of the right to

determine the evil and resist it with violence to certain persons or assemblies of men (much less, if we are these men), solves the question; whereas we all know that such a relegation does not at all solve the question, since there are some people who do not recognize this right as belonging to certain people or to assemblies of men.

But it is this recognition that what to us appears evil is evil, or an absolute failure to comprehend the question, which serves as a foundation for the judgment of the lay critics concerning the Christian teaching, so that the opinions concerning my book, both of the ecclesiastic and the lay critics, showed me that the majority of men absolutely fail to comprehend, not only Christ's very teaching, but even those questions to which it serves as an answer.

III

Thus, both the information received by me after the publication of my book, as to how the Christian teaching in its direct and true sense has without interruption been understood by the minority of men, and the criticisms upon it, both the ecclesiastic and the lay criticisms, which denied the possibility of understanding Christ's teaching in the direct sense, convinced me that, while, on the one hand, the true comprehension of this teaching never ceased for the minority, and became clearer and clearer to them, on the other hand, for the majority, its meaning became more and more obscure, finally reaching such a degree of obscurity that men no longer comprehend the simplest propositions, which are expressed in the Gospel in the simplest words.

The failure to comprehend Christ's teaching in its true, simple, and direct sense in our time, when the light of this teaching has penetrated all the darkest corners of human consciousness; when, as Christ has said, that which He has spoken in the ear, they now proclaim upon the housetops; when this teaching permeates all the sides of human life, – the domestic, the economic, the civil, the political, and the international, – this failure to comprehend would be incomprehensible, if there were no causes for it.

One of these causes is this, that both the believers and the unbelievers are firmly convinced that Christ's teaching has been comprehended by them long ago, and so completely, indubitably, and finally, that there can be no other meaning in it than the one they ascribe to it. This cause is due to the duration of the tradition of the false comprehension, and so of the failure to understand the true teaching.

The most powerful stream of water cannot add a drop to a vessel that is full.

It is possible to explain the most intricate matters to a man of very hard comprehension, so long as he has not formed any idea about them; but it is impossible to explain the simplest thing to a very clever man, if he is firmly convinced that he knows, and, besides, incontestably knows, what has been transmitted to him.

The Christian teaching presents itself to the men of our world precisely as such a teaching, which has for a long time and in a most indubitable manner been known in its minutest details, and which cannot be comprehended in any other manner than it now is.

Christianity is now understood by those who profess the church doctrines as a supernatural, miraculous revelation concerning everything which is given in the symbol of faith, and by those who do not believe, as an obsolete manifestation of humanity's need of believing in something supernatural, as a historical phenomenon, which is completely expressed in Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and which has no longer any vital meaning for us. For the believers the meaning of the teaching is concealed by the church, for unbelievers by science.

I shall begin with the first:

Eighteen hundred years ago there appeared in the pagan Roman world a strange, new teaching, which resembled nothing which preceded it, and which was ascribed to the man Christ.

This new teaching was absolutely new, both in form and in contents, for the European world, in the midst of which it arose, and especially in the Roman world, where it was preached and became diffused.

Amidst the elaborateness of the religious rules of Judaism, where, according to Isaiah, there was rule upon rule, and amidst the Roman legislation, which was worked out to a great degree of perfection, there appeared a teaching which not only denied all the divinities, – every fear of them, every divination and faith in them, – but also all human institutions and every necessity for them. In the place of all the rules of former faiths, this teaching advanced only the model of an inner perfection of truth and of love in the person of Christ, and the consequences of this inner perfection, attainable by men, – the external perfection, as predicted by the prophets, – the kingdom of God,

in which all men will stop warring, and all will be taught by God and united in love, and the lion will lie with the lamb. In place of the threats of punishments for the non-compliance with the rules, which were made by the former laws, both religious and political, in place of the enticement of rewards for fulfilling them, this teaching called men to itself only by its being the truth. John vii. 17: "If any man wants to know of this doctrine, whether it be of God, let him fulfil it." John viii. 46: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Why do you seek to kill a man who has told you the truth? The truth alone will free you. God must be professed in truth only. The whole teaching will be revealed and will be made clear by the spirit of truth. Do what I say, and you will know whether what I say is true.

No proofs were given of the teaching, except the truth, except the correspondence of the teaching with the truth. The whole teaching consisted in the knowledge of the truth and in following it, in a greater and ever greater approximation to it, in matters of life. According to this teaching, there are no acts which can justify a man, make him righteous; there is only the model of truth which attracts all hearts, for the inner perfection – in the person of Christ, and for the outer – in the realization of the kingdom of God. The fulfilment of the teaching is only in the motion along a given path, in the approximation to perfection, – the inner, – the imitation of Christ, and the outer, – the establishment of the kingdom of God. A man's greater or lesser good, according to this teaching, depends, not on the degree of perfection which he attains, but on the greater or lesser acceleration of motion.

The motion toward perfection of the publican, of Zachæus, of the harlot, of the robber on the cross, is, according to this teaching, a greater good than the immovable righteousness of the Pharisee. A sheep gone astray is more precious than ninety-nine who have not. The prodigal son, the lost coin which is found again, is more precious, more loved by God than those who were not lost.

Every condition is, according to this teaching, only a certain step on the road toward the unattainable inner and outer perfection, and so has no meaning. The good is only in the motion toward perfection; but the stopping at any stage whatsoever is only a cessation of the good.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," and "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

"Be ye perfect as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." "Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

The fulfilment of the teaching is only in unceasing motion, – in the attainment of a higher and ever higher truth, and in an ever greater realization of the same in oneself by means of an ever increasing love, and outside of oneself by an ever greater realization of the kingdom of God.

It is evident that, having appeared in the midst of the Jewish and the pagan world, this teaching could not have been accepted by the majority of men, who lived a life entirely different from the one which this teaching demanded; and that it could not even be comprehended in its full significance by those who accepted it, as it was diametrically opposed to their former views.

Only by a series of misconceptions, blunders, one-sided explanations, corrected and supplemented by generations of men, was the meaning of the Christian teaching made more and more clear to men. The Christian world-conception affected the Jewish and the pagan conceptions, and the Jewish and pagan conceptions affected the Christian world-conception. And the Christian, as being vital, penetrated the reviving Jewish and pagan conceptions more and more, and stood forth more and more clearly, freeing itself from the false admixture, which was imposed upon it. Men came to comprehend the meaning better and better, and more and more realized it in life.

The longer humanity lived, the more and more was the meaning of Christianity made clear to it, as indeed it could not and cannot be otherwise with any teaching about life.

The subsequent generations corrected the mistakes of their predecessors, and more and more approached the comprehension of its true meaning. Thus it has been since the earliest times of

Christianity. And here, in the earliest times, there appeared men, who began to assert that the meaning which they ascribed to the teaching was the only true one, and that as a proof of it served the supernatural phenomena which confirmed the correctness of their comprehension.

It was this that was the chief cause, at first, of the failure to comprehend the teaching, and later, of its complete corruption.

It was assumed that Christ's teaching was not transmitted to men like any other truth, but in a special, supernatural manner, so that the truth of the comprehension of the teaching was not proved by the correspondence of what was transmitted with the demands of reason and of the whole human nature, but by the miraculousness of the transmission, which served as an incontrovertible proof of the correctness of the comprehension. This proposition arose from a lack of comprehension, and its consequence was an impossibility of comprehending.

This began with the very first times, when the teaching was still understood incompletely and often perversely, as we may see from the gospels and from the Acts. The less the teaching was understood, the more obscurely did it present itself, and the more necessary were the external proofs of its veracity. The proposition about not doing unto another what one does not wish to have done to oneself did not need any proof by means of miracles, and there was no need for demanding belief in this proposition, because it is convincing in itself, in that it corresponds to both man's reason and nature, but the proposition as to Christ being God had to be proved by means of miracles, which are absolutely incomprehensible.

The more obscure the comprehension of Christ's teaching was, the more miraculous elements were mixed in with it; and the more miraculous elements were mixed in, the more did the teaching deviate from its meaning and become obscure; and the more it deviated from its meaning and became obscure, the more strongly it was necessary to assert one's infallibility, and the less did the teaching become comprehensible.

We can see from the gospels, the Acts, the epistles, how from the earliest times the failure to comprehend the teaching called forth the necessity of proving its truth by means of the miraculous and the incomprehensible.

According to the Acts, this began with the meeting of the disciples at Jerusalem, who assembled to settle the question which had arisen as to baptizing or not baptizing the uncircumcised who were still eating meats offered to idols.

The very putting of the question showed that those who were discussing it did not understand the teaching of Christ, who rejected all external rites – ablutions, purifications, fasts, Sabbaths. It says directly that not the things which enter a man's mouth, but those which come out of his heart, defile him, and so the question as to the baptism of the uncircumcised could have arisen only among men who loved their teacher, dimly felt His greatness, but still very obscurely comprehended the teaching itself. And so it was.

In proportion as the members of the assembly did not understand the teaching, they needed an external confirmation of their incomplete understanding. And so, to solve the question, the very putting of which shows the failure to comprehend the teaching, the strange words, "It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," which were in an external manner to confirm the justice of certain establishments, and which have caused so much evil, were, as described in the Book of Acts, for the first time pronounced at this meeting, that is, it was asserted that the justice of what they decreed was testified to by the miraculous participation of the Holy Ghost, that is, of God, in this solution. But the assertion that the Holy Ghost, that is, God, spoke through the apostles, had again to be proved. And for this it was necessary to assert that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down in the shape of tongues of fire on those who asserted this. (In the description the descent of the Holy Ghost precedes the assembly, but the Acts were written down much later than either.) But the descent of the Holy Ghost had to be confirmed for those who had not seen the tongues of fire (though it is incomprehensible why a tongue of fire burning above a man's head

should prove that what a man says is an indisputable truth), and there were needed new miracles, cures, resurrections, putting to death, and all those offensive miracles, with which the Acts are filled, and which not only can never convince a man of the truth of the Christian teaching, but can only repel him from it. The consequence of such a method of confirmation was this, that the more these confirmations of the truth by means of stories of miracles heaped up upon one another, the more did the teaching itself depart from its original meaning, and the less comprehensible did it become.

Thus it has been since the earliest times, and it has been increasingly so all the time, until it logically reached in our time the dogmas of the transubstantiation and of the infallibility of the Pope, or of the bishops, or of the writings, that is, something absolutely incomprehensible, which has reached the point of absurdity and the demand for a blind faith, not in God, not in Christ, not even in the teaching, but in a person, as is the case in Catholicism, or in several persons, as in Orthodoxy, or in a book, as in Protestantism. The more Christianity became diffused, and the greater was the crowd of unprepared men which it embraced, the less it was understood, the more definitely was the infallibility of the comprehension asserted, and the less did it become possible to understand the true meaning of the teaching. As early as the time of Constantine the whole comprehension of the teaching was reduced to a résumé, confirmed by the worldly power, – a résumé of disputes which took place in a council, – to a symbol of faith, in which it says, I believe in so and so, and so and so, and finally, in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, that is, in the infallibility of those persons who call themselves the church, so that everything was reduced to this, that a man no longer believes in God, nor in Christ, as they have been revealed to him, but in what the church commands him to believe.

But the church is holy, – the church was founded by Christ. God could not have left it to men to give an arbitrary interpretation to His teaching, – and so He established the church. All these expositions are to such an extent unjust and bold that one feels some compunction in overthrowing them.

There is nothing but the assertion of the churches to show that God or Christ founded anything resembling what the churchmen understand by church.

In the Gospel there is an indication against the church, as an external authority, and this indication is most obvious and clear in that place where it says that Christ's disciples should not call any one teachers and fathers. But nowhere is there anything said about the establishment of what the churchmen call a church.

In the gospels the word "church" is used twice, – once, in the sense of an assembly of men deciding a dispute; the other time, in connection with the obscure words about the rock, Peter, and the gates of hell. From these two mentions of the word "church," which has the meaning of nothing but an assembly, they deduce what we now understand by the word "church."

But Christ could certainly not have founded a church, that is, what we now understand by the word, because neither in Christ's words, nor in the conceptions of the men of that time, was there anything resembling the concept of a church, as we know it now, with its sacraments, its hierarchy, and, above all, its assertion of infallibility.

The fact that men named what was formed later by the same word which Christ had used in respect to something else, does in no way give them the right to assert that Christ established the one, true church.

Besides, if Christ had really founded such an institution as the church, on which the whole doctrine and the whole faith are based, He would most likely have expressed this establishment in such definite and clear words, and would have given the one, true church, outside of the stories about the miracles, which are used in connection with every superstition, such signs as to leave no doubts concerning its authenticity; there is nothing of the kind, but there are now, as there have been, all kinds of institutions which, each of them, call themselves the one, true church.

The Catholic catechism says: "*L'église est la société de fidèles établie par notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, répandue sur toute la terre et soumise à l'autorité des pasteurs légitimes, principalement notre Saint Père – le Pape*," meaning by "*pasteurs légitimes*" a human institution, which has the Pope at its head and which is composed of certain persons who are connected among themselves by a certain organization.

The Orthodox catechism says: "The church is a society, established by Jesus Christ upon earth, united among themselves into one whole by the one, divine teaching and the sacraments, under the guidance and management of the God-established hierarchy," meaning by "God-established hierarchy" the Greek hierarchy, which is composed of such and such persons, who are to be found in such and such places.

The Lutheran catechism says: "The church is holy Christianity, or an assembly of all believers, under Christ, their chief, in which the Holy Ghost through the Gospel and the sacraments offers, communicates, and secures divine salvation," meaning, by this, that the Catholic Church has gone astray and has fallen away, and that the true tradition is preserved in Lutheranism.

For the Catholics the divine church coincides with the Roman hierarchy and the Pope. For the Greek Orthodox the divine church coincides with the establishment of the Eastern and the Russian Church.⁸ For the Lutherans the divine church coincides with the assembly of men who recognize the Bible and Luther's catechism.

Speaking of the origin of Christianity, men who belong to one or the other of the existing churches generally use the word "church" in the singular, as though there has been but one church. But this is quite untrue. The church, as an institution which asserts of itself that it is in possession of the unquestionable truth, appeared only when it was not alone, but there were at least two of them.

So long as the believers agreed among themselves, and the assembly was one, it had no need of asserting that it was the church. Only when the believers divided into opposite parties, which denied one another, did there appear the necessity for each side to assert its authenticity, ascribing infallibility to itself. The concept of the one church arose only from this, that, when two sides disagreed and quarrelled, each of them, calling the other a heresy, recognized only its own as the infallible church.

If we know that there was a church, which in the year 51 decided to receive the uncircumcised, this church made its appearance only because there was another church, that of the Judaizing, which had decided not to receive the uncircumcised.

If there now is a Catholic Church, which asserts its infallibility, it does this only because there are the Græco-Russian, Orthodox, Lutheran Churches, each of which asserts its own infallibility, and thus rejects all the other churches. Thus the one church is only a fantastic conception, which has not the slightest sign of reality.

As an actual, historical phenomenon there have existed only many assemblies of men, each of which has asserted that it is the one church, established by Christ, and that all the others, which call themselves churches, are heresies and schisms.

⁸ Khomyakóv's definition of the church, which has some currency among Russians, does not mend matters, if we recognize with Khomyakóv that the Orthodox is the one true church. Khomyakóv asserts that the church is an assembly of men (of all, both the clergy and the congregation) united in love, and that the truth is revealed only to those who are united in love (Let us love one another, so that in agreement of thought, and so forth), and that such a church is the one which, in the first place, recognizes the Nicene symbol, and, in the second, after the division of the churches, does not recognize the Pope and the new dogmas. But with such a definition of the church there appears a still greater difficulty in harmonizing, as Khomyakóv wants to, the church which is united in love with the church which recognizes the Nicene symbol and the justice of Photius. Thus Khomyakóv's assertion that this church, which is united in love and so is holy, is the church as professed by the Greek hierarchy, is still more arbitrary than the assertions of the Catholics and of the ancient Orthodox. If we admit the concept of the church in the sense which Khomyakóv gives to it, that is, as an assembly of men united in love and in truth, then everything a man can say in relation to this assembly is, that it is very desirable to be a member of such an assembly, if such exists, that is, to be in love and truth; but there are no external signs by which it would be possible to count oneself or another in with this holy assembly, or to exclude oneself from it, as no external institution can correspond to this concept. —*Author's Note.*

The catechisms of the most widely diffused churches, the Catholic, the Orthodox, and the Lutheran, say so outright.

In the Catholic catechism it says: "*Quels sont ceux, qui sont hors de l'église? Les infidèles, les hérétiques, les schismatiques.*" As schismatics are regarded the so-called Orthodox. The Lutherans are considered to be heretics; thus, according to the Catholic catechism, the Catholics alone are in the church.

In the so-called Orthodox catechism it says: "By the one church of Christ is meant nothing but the Orthodox, which remains in complete agreement with the œcumenical church. But as to the Roman Church and the other confessions" (the church does not even mention the Lutherans and others), "they cannot be referred to the one, true church, since they have themselves separated from it."

According to this definition the Catholics and Lutherans are outside the church, and in the church are only the Orthodox.

But the Lutheran catechism runs as follows: "*Die wahre Kirche wird daran erkannt, dass in ihr das Wort Gottes lauter und rein ohne Menschenzusätze gelehrt und die Sacramente treu nach Christi Einsetzung gewahrt werden.*"

According to this definition, all those who have added anything to the teaching of Christ and the apostles, as the Catholic and Greek Churches have done, are outside the church. And in the church are only the Protestants.

The Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost has uninterruptedly operated in their hierarchy; the Orthodox assert that the same Holy Ghost has operated in their hierarchy; the Arians asserted that the Holy Ghost operated in their hierarchy (this they asserted with as much right as the now ruling churches assert it); the Protestants of every description, Lutherans, Reformers, Presbyterians, Methodists, Swedenborgians, Mormons, assert that the Holy Ghost operates only in their assemblies.

If the Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost during the division of the Arian and of the Greek Churches left the apostatizing churches and remained only in the one, true church, the Protestants of every denomination can with the same right assert that during the separation of their church from the Catholic the Holy Ghost left the Catholic Church and passed over to the one which they recognize. And so they do.

Every church deduces its profession through an uninterrupted tradition from Christ and the apostles. And, indeed, every Christian confession, arising from Christ, must have inevitably reached the present generation through a certain tradition. But this does not prove that any one of these traditions, excluding all the others, is indubitably the correct one.

Every twig on the tree goes uninterruptedly back to the root; but the fact that every twig comes from the same root does in no way prove that there is but one twig. The same is true of the churches. Every church offers precisely the same proofs of its succession and even of the miracles in favour of its own authenticity; thus there is but one strict and precise definition of what the church is (not as something fantastic, which we should like it to be, but as something which in reality exists), and this is: the church is an assembly of men, who assert that they, and they only, are in the full possession of the truth.

It was these assemblies, which later on, with the aid of the support of the temporal power, passed into mighty institutions, that were the chief impediments in the dissemination of the true comprehension of Christ's teaching.

Nor could it be otherwise: the chief peculiarity of Christ's teaching, as distinguished from all the former teachings, consisted in this, that the men who accepted it tried more and more to understand and fulfil the teaching, whereas the church doctrine asserted the full and final comprehension and fulfilment of this teaching.

However strange it may seem to us people educated in the false doctrine about the church as a Christian institution, and in the contempt for heresy, it was only in what is called heresy that there was true motion, that is, true Christianity, and it ceased to be such when it stopped its motion in these heresies and became itself arrested in the immovable forms of the church.

Indeed, what is a heresy? Read all the theological works which treat about heresies, a subject which is the first to present itself for definition, since every theology speaks of the true teaching amidst the surrounding false teachings, that is, heresies, and you will nowhere find anything resembling a definition of heresy.

As a specimen of that complete absence of any semblance of a definition of what is understood by the word "heresy" may serve the opinion on this subject expressed by the learned historian of Christianity, E. de Pressensé, in his *Histoire du Dogme*, with the epigraph, "*Ubi Christus, ibi Ecclesia*" (Paris, 1869). This is what he says in his introduction: "*Je sais que l'on nous conteste le droit de califier ainsi,*" that is, to call heresies "*les tendances qui furent si vivement combattues par les premiers Pères. La désignation même d'hérésie semble une atteinte portée à la liberté de conscience et de pensée. Nous ne pouvons partager ces scrupules, car ils n'iraient à rien moins qu'à enlever au christianisme tout caractère distinctif.*"

And after saying that after Constantine the church actually misused its power in defining the dissenters as heretics and persecuting them, he passes judgment on the early times and says:

"L'église est une libre association; il y a tout profit à se séparer d'elle. La polémique contre l'erreur n'a d'autres ressources que la pensée et le sentiment. Un type doctrinal uniforme n'a pas encore été élaboré; les divergences secondaires se produisent en Orient et en Occident avec une entière liberté, la théologie n'est point liée à d'invariables formules. Si au sein de cette diversité apparaît un fond commun de croyances, n'est-on pas en droit d'y voir non pas un système formulé et composé par les représentants d'une autorité d'école, mais la foi elle-même, dans son instinct le plus sûr et sa manifestation la plus spontanée? Si cette même unanimité qui se révèle dans les croyances essentielles, se retrouve pour repousser telles ou telles tendances, ne seront-elles pas en droit de conclure que ces tendances étaient en désaccord flagrant avec les principes fondamentaux du christianisme? Cette présomption ne se transformera-t-elle pas en certitude si nous reconnaissons dans la doctrine universellement repoussée par l'église les traits caractéristiques de l'une des religions du passé? Pour dire que le gnosticisme ou l'ebionitisme sont les formes légitimes de la pensée chrétienne, il faut dire hardiment qu'il n'y a pas de pensée chrétienne, ni de caractère spécifique qui la fasse reconnaître. Sous prétexte de l'élargir on la dissout. Personne, au temps de Platon, n'eut osé de couvrir de son nom, une doctrine qui n'eut pas fait place à la théorie des idées, et l'on eut excité les justes moqueries de la Grèce, en voulant faire d'Epicure ou de Zénon un disciple de l'Académie. Reconnaissons donc que s'il existe une religion et une doctrine qui s'appelle le christianisme elle peut avoir ses hérésies."

The whole discussion of the author reduces itself to this, that every opinion which is not in agreement with a code of dogmas professed by us at a given time is a heresy; but at a given time and in a given place people profess something, and this profession of something in some place cannot be a criterion of the truth.

Everything reduces itself to this, that "*Ubi Christus, ibi Ecclesia*;" but Christ is where we are. Every so-called heresy, by recognizing as the truth what it professes, can in a similar manner find in the history of the churches a consistent explanation of what it professes, using for itself all the arguments of De Pressensé and calling only its own confession truly Christian, precisely what all the heresies have been doing.

The only definition of heresy (the word ἡρесь means *part*) is the name given by an assembly of men to every judgment which rejects part of the teaching, as professed by the assembly. A more particular meaning, which more frequently than any other is ascribed to heresy, is that of an opinion which rejects the church doctrine, as established and supported by the worldly power.

There is a remarkable, little known, very large work (*Unpartheyische Kirchen und Ketzer-Historia*, 1729), by Gottfried Arnold, which treats directly on this subject and which shows all the illegality, arbitrariness, senselessness, and cruelty of using the word "heresy" in the sense of rejection. This book is an attempt at describing the history of Christianity in the form of a history of the heresies.

In the introduction the author puts a number of questions: (1) regarding those who make heretics (*von den Ketzermachern selbst*); (2) concerning those who were made heretics; (3) concerning the subjects of heresy; (4) concerning the method of making heretics, and (5) concerning the aims and consequences of making heretics.

In connection with each of these points he puts dozens of questions, answers to which he later gives from the works of well-known theologians, but he chiefly leaves it to the reader himself to make the deduction from the exposition of the whole book. I shall quote the following as samples of these questions, which partly contain the answers. In reference to the fourth point, as to how heretics are made, he says in one of his questions (the seventh): "Does not all history show that the greatest makers of heretics and the masters of this work were those same wise men from whom the Father has hidden His secrets, that is, the hypocrites, Pharisees, and lawyers, or entirely godless and corrupt people?" Questions 20 and 21: "And did not, in the most corrupt times of Christianity, the hypocrites and envious people reject those very men who were particularly endowed by God with great gifts, and who in the time of pure Christianity would have been highly esteemed? And, on the contrary, would not these men, who during the decadence of Christianity elevated themselves above everything and recognized themselves to be the teachers of the purest Christianity, have been recognized, in apostolic times, as the basest heretics and antichristians?"

Expressing in these questions this thought, among others, that the verbal expression of the essence of faith, which was demanded by the church, and a departure from which was considered a heresy, could never completely cover the world-conception of the believer, and that, therefore, the demand for an expression of faith by means of particular words was the cause of heresy, he says, in Questions 21 and 33:

"And if the divine acts and thoughts present themselves to a man as so great and profound that he does not find corresponding words in which to express them, must he be recognized as a heretic, if he is not able precisely to express his ideas? And is not this true, that in the early times there was no heresy, because the Christians did not judge one another according to verbal expressions, but according to the heart and acts, in connection with a complete liberty of expression, without fear of being recognized as a heretic? Was it not a very common and easy method with the church," he says in Question 21, "when the clergy wanted to get rid of a person or ruin him, to make him suspected as regards his doctrine and to throw over him the cloak of heresy, and thus to condemn and remove him?"

"Though it is true that amidst the so-called heretics there were errors and sins, yet it is not less true and obvious from the numberless examples here adduced" (that is, in the history of the church and of heresy), he says farther on, "that there has not been a single sincere and conscientious man with some standing who has not been ruined by the churchmen out of envy or for other causes."

Thus, nearly two hundred years ago, was the significance of heresy understood, and yet this conception continues to exist until the present time. Nor can it fail to exist, so long as there is a concept of the church. Heresy is the reverse of the church. Where there is the church, there is also heresy. The church is an assembly of men asserting that they are in possession of the indisputable truth. Heresy is the opinion of people who do not recognize the indisputableness of the church truth.

Heresy is a manifestation of motion in the church, an attempt at destroying the ossified assertion of the church, an attempt at a living comprehension of the teaching. Every step of moving forward, of comprehending and fulfilling the teaching has been accomplished by the heretics: such

heretics were Tertullian, and Origen, and Augustine, and Luther, and Huss, and Savonarola, and Chelcický, and others. Nor could it be otherwise.

A disciple of Christ, whose teaching consists in an eternally greater and greater comprehension of the teaching and in a greater and greater fulfilment of it, in a motion toward perfection, cannot, for the very reason that he is a disciple of Christ, assert concerning himself or concerning any one else, that he fully understands Christ's teaching and fulfils it; still less can he assert this concerning any assembly.

No matter at what stage of comprehension and perfection a disciple of Christ may be, he always feels the insufficiency of his comprehension and of his fulfilment, and always strives after a greater comprehension and fulfilment. And so the assertion about myself or about an assembly, that I, or we, possess the complete comprehension of Christ's teaching, and completely fulfil it, is a renunciation of the spirit of Christ's teaching.

No matter how strange this may seem, the churches, as churches, have always been, and cannot help but be, institutions that are not only foreign, but even directly hostile, to Christ's teaching. With good reason Voltaire called the church "*l'infâme*;" with good reason all, or nearly all, the Christian so-called sects have recognized the church to be that whore of whom Revelation prophesies; with good reason the history of the church is the history of the greatest cruelties and horrors.

The churches, as churches, are not certain institutions which have at their base the Christian principle, though slightly deviated from the straight path, as some think; the churches, as churches, as assemblies, which assert their infallibility, are antichristian institutions. Between the churches, as churches, and Christianity there is not only nothing in common but the name, but they are two absolutely divergent and mutually hostile principles. One is pride, violence, self-assertion, immobility, and death; the other is meekness, repentance, humility, motion, and life.

It is impossible at the same time to serve both masters, – one or the other has to be chosen.

The servants of the churches of all denominations have tried, especially of late, to appear as advocates of motion in Christianity; they make concessions, wish to mend the abuses which have stolen into the church, and say that for the sake of the abuses we ought not to deny the principle of the Christian church itself, which alone can unite all men and be a mediator between men and God. But all this is not true. The churches have not only never united, but have always been one of the chief causes of the disunion of men, of the hatred of one another, of wars, slaughters, inquisitions, nights of St. Bartholomew, and so forth, and the churches never serve as mediators between men and God, which is, indeed, unnecessary and is directly forbidden by Christ, who has revealed the teaching directly to every man, and they put up dead forms in the place of God, and not only fail to reveal God to man, but even conceal Him from them. Churches which have arisen from the failure to comprehend, and which maintain this lack of comprehension by their immobility, cannot help persecuting and oppressing every comprehension of the teaching. They try to conceal this, but this is impossible, because every motion forward along the path indicated by Christ destroys their existence.

As one hears and reads the articles and sermons, in which the church writers of modern times of all denominations speak of Christian truths and virtues, as one hears and reads these clever discussions, admonitions, confessions, which have been worked out by the ages, and which sometimes look very much as though they were sincere, one is prepared to doubt that the churches could be hostile to Christianity: "It certainly cannot be that these people, who have produced such men as Chrysostom, Fénelon, Butler, and other preachers of Christianity, should be hostile to it." One feels like saying: "The churches may have deviated from Christianity, may be in error, but cannot be hostile to it." But as one looks at the fruits, in order to judge the tree, as Christ has taught us to do, and sees that their fruits have been evil, that the consequence of their activity has been the distortion of Christianity, one cannot help but feel that, no matter how good the men have been,

the cause of the churches in which they have taken part has not been Christian. The goodness and the deserts of all these men, who served the churches, were the goodness and the deserts of men, but not of the cause which they served. All these good men – like Francis d'Assisi and Francis de Lobes, our Tíkhon Zadónski, Thomas à Kempis, and others – were good men, in spite of their having served a cause which is hostile to Christianity, and they would have been better and more deserving still, if they had not succumbed to the error which they served.

But why speak of the past, judge of the past, which may have been falsely represented to us? The churches with their foundations and with their activity are not a work of the past: the churches are now before us, and we can judge of them directly, by their activity, their influence upon men.

In what does the activity of the churches now consist? How do they act upon men? What do the churches do in our country, among the Catholics, among the Protestants of every denomination? In what does their activity consist, and what are the consequences of their activity?

The activity of our Russian, so-called Orthodox, Church is in full sight. It is a vast fact, which cannot be concealed, and about which there can be no dispute.

In what consists the activity of this Russian Church, this enormous, tensely active institution, which consists of an army of half a million, costing the nation tens of millions?

The activity of this church consists in using every possible means for the purpose of instilling in the one hundred millions of the Russian population those obsolete, backward faiths, which now have no justification whatsoever, and which sometime in the past were professed by people that are alien to our nation, and in which hardly any one now believes, frequently even not those whose duty it is to disseminate these false doctrines.

The inculcation of these alien, obsolete formulas of the Byzantine clergy, which no longer have any meaning for the men of our time, about the Trinity, the Holy Virgin, the sacraments, grace, and so forth, forms one part of the activity of the Russian Church; another part of its activity consists in the activity of maintaining idolatry in the direct sense of the word, – worshipping holy relics and images, bringing sacrifices to them, and expecting from them the fulfilment of their wishes. I shall not speak of what is spoken and written by the clergy with a shade of learning and liberalism in the clerical periodicals, but of what actually is done by the clergy over the breadth of the Russian land among a population of one hundred million people. What do they carefully, persistently, tensely, everywhere without exception, teach the people? What is demanded of them on the strength of the so-called Christian faith?

I will begin with the beginning, with the birth of a child: at the birth of a child, the clergy teaches that a prayer has to be read over the mother and the child, in order to purify them, since without this prayer the mother who has given birth to a child is accursed. For this purpose the priest takes the child in his hands in front of the representations of the saints, which the masses simply call gods, and pronounces exorcising words, and thus purifies the mother. Then it is impressed on the parents, and even demanded of them under threat of punishment in case of non-fulfilment, that the child shall be baptized, that is, dipped three times in water by the priest, in connection with which incomprehensible words are pronounced and even less comprehensible acts performed, – the smearing of various parts of the body with oil, the shearing of the hair, and the blowing and spitting of the sponsors on the imaginary devil. All this is supposed to cleanse the child and make him a Christian. Then the parents are impressed with the necessity of giving the holy sacrament to the child, that is, of giving him under the form of bread and wine a particle of Christ's body to eat, in consequence of which the child will receive the grace of Christ, and so forth. Then it is demanded that this child, according to his age, shall learn to pray. To pray means to stand straight in front of the boards on which the faces of Christ, the Virgin, the saints, are represented, and incline his head and his whole body, and with his right hand, with fingers put together in a certain form, to touch his brow, shoulders, and stomach, and pronounce Church-Slavic words, of which all the children are particularly enjoined to repeat, "Mother of God, Virgin, rejoice!" etc. Then the pupil is

impressed with the necessity of doing the same, that is, crossing himself, in presence of any church or image; then he is told that on holidays (holidays are days on which Christ was born, though no one knows when that was, and circumcised, on which the Mother of God died, the cross was brought, the image was carried in, a saintly fool saw a vision, etc.,) he must put on his best clothes and go to church, buy tapers there and place them in front of images of saints, hand in little notes and commemorations and loaves, that triangles may be cut in them, and then pray many times for the health and welfare of the Tsar and the bishops, and for himself and his acts, and then kiss the cross and the priest's hand.

Besides this prayer he is enjoined to prepare himself at least once a year for the holy sacrament. To prepare himself for the holy sacrament means to go to church and tell the priest his sins, on the supposition that his imparting his sins to a stranger will completely cleanse him of his sins, and then to eat from a spoon a bit of bread with wine, which purifies him even more. Then it is impressed upon a man and a woman, who want their carnal intercourse to be sacred, that they must come to church, put on metallic crowns, drink potions, to the sound of singing walk three times around a table, and that then their carnal intercourse will become sacred and quite distinct from any other carnal intercourse.

In life people are impressed with the necessity of observing the following rules: not to eat meat or milk food on certain days, on other certain days to celebrate masses for the dead, on holidays to receive the priest and give him money, and several times a year to take the boards with the representations out of the church and carry them on sashes over fields and through houses. Before death a man is enjoined to eat from a spoon bread with wine, and still better, if he has time, to have himself smeared with oil. This secures for him happiness in the next world. After a man's death, his relatives are enjoined, for the purpose of saving the soul of the defunct, to put into his hands a printed sheet with a prayer; it is also useful to have a certain book read over the dead body and the name of the dead man pronounced several times in church.

All this is considered an obligatory faith for everybody.

But if one wants to care for his soul, he is taught, according to this faith, that the greatest amount of blessedness is secured for the soul in the world to come by contributing money for churches and monasteries, by putting holy men thus under obligation to pray for him. Other soul-saving measures, according to this faith, are the visiting of monasteries and the kissing of miracle-working images and relics.

According to this faith, miracle-working images and relics concentrate in themselves particular holiness, strength, and grace, and nearness to these objects – touching, kissing them, placing tapers before them, crawling up to them – contributes very much to a man's salvation, and so do masses, which are ordered before these sacred objects.

It is this faith, and no other, which is called Orthodox, that is, the right faith, and which has, under the guise of Christianity, been impressed upon the people for many centuries by the exercise of all kinds of force, and is now being impressed with particular effort.

And let it not be said that the Orthodox teachers place the essence of the teaching in something else, and that these are only ancient forms which it is not considered right to destroy. That is not true: throughout all of Russia, nothing but this faith has of late been impressed upon the people with particular effort. There is nothing else. Of something else they talk and write in the capitals, but only this is being impressed on one hundred million of people, and nothing else. The churchmen talk of other things, but they enjoin only this with every means at their command.

All this, and the worship of persons and images, is introduced into theologies, into catechisms; the masses are carefully taught this theoretically, and, being hypnotized practically, with every means of solemnity, splendour, authority, and violence, are made to believe in this, and are jealously guarded against every endeavour to be freed from these savage superstitions.

In my very presence, as I said in reference to my book, Christ's teaching and his own words concerning non-resistance to evil were a subject of ridicule and circus jokes, and the churchmen not only did not oppose this, but even encouraged the blasphemy; but allow yourself to say a disrespectful word concerning the monstrous idol, which is blasphemously carried about in Moscow by drunken persons under the name of the Iberian Virgin, and a groan of indignation will be raised by these same churchmen. All that is preached is the external cult of idolatry. Let no one say that one thing does not interfere with the other, that "these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone," that "all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. xxiii. 23, 3). This is said of the Pharisees, who fulfilled all the external injunctions of the law, and so the words, "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe," refer to works of charity and of goodness, and the words, "but do ye not after their works, for they say, and do not," refer to the execution of ceremonies and to the omission of good works, and have precisely the opposite meaning to what the churchmen want to ascribe to this passage, when they interpret it as meaning that ceremonies are to be observed. An external cult and serving charity and truth are hard to harmonize; for the most part one thing excludes the other. Thus it was with the Pharisees, and thus it is now with the church Christians.

If a man can save himself through redemption, sacraments, prayer, he no longer needs any good deeds.

The Sermon on the Mount, or the symbol of faith: it is impossible to believe in both. And the churchmen have chosen the latter: the symbol of faith is taught and read as a prayer in the churches; and the Sermon on the Mount is excluded even from the Gospel teachings in the churches, so that in the churches the parishioners never hear it, except on the days when the whole Gospel is read. Nor can it be otherwise: men who believe in a bad and senseless God, who has cursed the human race and who has doomed His son to be a victim, and has doomed a part of humanity to everlasting torment, cannot believe in a God of love. A man who believes in God-Christ, who will come again in glory to judge and punish the living and the dead, cannot believe in Christ, who commands a man to offer his cheek to the offender, not to judge, but to forgive, and to love our enemies. A man who believes in the divine inspiration of the Old Testament and the holiness of David, who on his death-bed orders the killing of an old man who has offended him and whom he could not kill himself, because he was bound by an oath (Book of Kings, ii. 3), and similar abominations, of which the Old Testament is full, cannot believe in Christ's moral law; a man who believes in the doctrine and the preaching of the church about the compatibility of executions and wars with Christianity, cannot believe in the brotherhood of men.

Above all else, a man who believes in the salvation of men through faith, in redemption, or in the sacraments, can no longer employ all his strength in the fulfilment in life of the moral teaching of Christ.

A man who is taught by the church the blasphemous doctrine about his not being able to be saved by his own efforts, but that there is another means, will inevitably have recourse to this means, and not to his efforts, on which he is assured it is a sin to depend. The church doctrine, any church doctrine, with its redemption and its sacraments, excludes Christ's teaching, and the Orthodox doctrine, with its idolatry, does so especially.

"But the masses have always believed so themselves, and believe so now," people will say to this. "The whole history of the Russian masses proves this. It is not right to deprive the masses of their tradition." In this does the deception consist. The masses at one time, indeed, professed something like what the church professes now, though it was far from being the same (among the masses, there has existed, not only this superstition of the images, house spirits, relics, and the seventh Thursday after Easter, with its wreaths and birches, but also a deep moral, vital comprehension of Christianity, which has never existed in the whole church, and was met with only in its best representatives); but the masses, in spite of all the obstacles, which the government

and the church have opposed to them, have long ago in their best representatives outlived this coarse stage of comprehension, which is proved by the spontaneous birth of rationalistic sects, with which one meets everywhere, with which Russia swarms at the present time, and with which the churchmen struggle in vain. The masses move on in the consciousness of the moral, vital side of Christianity. And it is here that the church appears with its failure to support, and with its intensified inculcation of an obsolete paganism in its ossified form, with its tendency to push the masses back into that darkness, from which they are struggling with so much effort to get out.

"We do not teach the masses anything new, but only what they believe in, and that in a more perfect form," say the churchmen.

This is the same as tying up a growing chick and pushing it back into the shell from which it has come.

I have often been struck by this observation, which would be comical, if its consequences were not so terrible, that men, taking hold of each other in a circle, deceive one another, without being able to get out of the enchanted circle.

The first question, the first doubt of a Russian who is beginning to think, is the question about the miracle-working images and, above all, the relics: "Is it true that they are imperishable, and that they work miracles?" Hundreds and thousands of men put these questions to themselves and are troubled about their solution, especially because the bishops, metropolitans, and all the dignitaries kiss the relics and the miracle-working images. Ask the bishops and the dignitaries why they do so, and they will tell you that they do so for the sake of the masses, and the masses worship the images and relics, because the bishops and dignitaries do so.

The activity of the Russian Church, in spite of its external veneer of modernness, learning, spirituality, which its members are beginning to assume in their writings, articles, clerical periodicals, and sermons, consists not only in keeping the masses in that consciousness of rude and savage idolatry, in which they are, but also in intensifying and disseminating superstition and religious ignorance, by pushing out of the masses the vital comprehension of Christianity, which has been living in them by the side of the idolatry.

I remember, I was once present in the monastery bookstore of Óptin Cloister, when an old peasant was choosing some religious books for his grandson, who could read. The monk kept pushing the description of relics, holidays, miraculous images, psalters, etc., into his hands. I asked the old man if he had the Gospel. "No." "Give him the Russian Gospel," I said to the monk. "That is not proper for him," said the monk.

This is in compressed form the activity of our church.

"But this is only true in barbarous Russia," a European or American reader will say. And such an opinion will be correct, but only in the measure in which it refers to the government which aids the church in accomplishing its stultifying and corrupting influence in Russia.

It is true that nowhere in Europe is there such a despotic government and one to such a degree in accord with the ruling church, and so the participation of the power in the corruption of the masses in Russia is very strong; but it is not true that the Russian Church in its influence upon the masses in any way differs from any other church.

The churches are everything the same, and if the Catholic, the Anglican, and the Lutheran Churches have not in hand such an obedient government as is the Russian, this is not due to the absence of any desire to make use of the same.

The church, as a church, no matter what it may be, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, – every church, inasmuch as it is a church, cannot help but tend toward the same as the Russian Church, – toward concealing the true meaning of Christ's teaching and substituting in its place its own doctrine, which does not put a person under any obligations, excludes the possibility of understanding the true activity of Christ's teaching, and, above all else, justifies the existence of priests who are living at the expense of the nation.

Has Catholicism been doing anything else with its prohibition of the reading of the Gospel, and with its demand for unreasoning obedience to the ecclesiastic guides and the infallible Pope? Does Catholicism preach anything different from what the Russian Church preaches? We have here the same external cult, the same relics, miracles, and statues, the miracle-working Notre-Dames, and processions. The same elatedly misty judgments concerning Christianity in books and sermons, and, when it comes to facts, the same maintenance of a coarse idolatry.

And is not the same being done in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and in every Protestantism which has formed itself into a church? The same demands from the congregation for a belief in dogmas which were expressed in the fourth century and have lost all meaning for the men of our time, and the same demand for idolatry, if not before relics and images, at least before the Sabbath and the letter of the Bible. It is still the same activity, which is directed upon concealing the real demands of Christianity and substituting for them externals, which do not put a man under any obligations, and "cant," as the English beautifully define the occupation to which they are particularly subject. Among the Protestants this activity is particularly noticeable, since they do not even have the excuse of antiquity. And does not the same take place in the modern Revivalism, – the renovated Calvinism, Evangelism, – out of which has grown up the Salvation Army? Just as the condition of all the church doctrines is the same in reference to Christ's teaching, so are also their methods.

Their condition is such that they cannot help but strain all their efforts, in order to conceal the teaching of Christ, whose name they use.

The incompatibility of all the church confessions with Christ's teaching is such that it takes especial efforts to conceal this incompatibility from men. Indeed, we need but stop and think of the condition of any adult, not only cultured, but even simple, man of our time, who has filled himself with conceptions, which are in the air, from the fields of geology, physics, chemistry, cosmography, history, when he for the first time looks consciously at the beliefs, instilled in him in childhood and supported by the churches, that God created the world in six days; that there was light before the sun; that Noah stuck all the animals into his ark, and so forth; that Jesus is the same God, the son, who created everything before this; that this God descended upon earth for Adam's sin; that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits on the right of the Father, and will come in the clouds to judge the world, and so forth.

All these propositions, which were worked out by the men of the fourth century and had a certain meaning for the men of that time, have no meaning for the men of the present. The men of our time may repeat these words with their lips, but they cannot believe, because these words, like the statements that God lives in heaven, that the heavens opened and a voice said something from there, that Christ rose from the dead and flew somewhere to heaven and will again come from somewhere in the clouds, and so forth, have no meaning for us.

It was possible for a man, who regarded the heaven as a finite, firm vault, to believe, or not, that God created the heaven, that heaven was opened, that Christ flew to heaven; but for us these words have no meaning whatsoever. Men of our time can only believe that they must believe so; but they cannot believe in what has no meaning for them.

But if all these expressions are to have a figurative meaning and are emblems, we know that, in the first place, not all churchmen agree in this, but that, on the contrary, the majority insist on understanding Holy Scripture in a direct sense, and, secondly, that these interpretations are varied and not confirmed by anything.

But even if a man wishes to make himself believe in the doctrine of the churches, as it is imparted, – the general diffusion of knowledge and of the Gospels, and the intercourse of men of various denominations among themselves, form for this another, even more insuperable obstacle.

A man of our time need but buy himself a Gospel for three kopeks and read Christ's clear words to the woman of Samaria, which are not subject to any other interpretation, about the Father

needing no worshippers in Jerusalem, neither in this mountain, nor in that, worshippers in spirit and in truth, or the words about a Christian's being obliged to pray, not in temples, as the pagans do, and in the sight of all, but in secret, that is, in his closet, or that a disciple of Christ must not call any one father or teacher, – a man needs but read these words, to become convinced that no ecclesiastic pastors, who call themselves teachers in opposition to Christ's teaching, and who quarrel among themselves, form an authority, and that that which the churchmen teach us is not Christianity. But more than that: if a man of our time continues to believe in miracles and does not read the Gospel, his mere intercourse with men of other denominations and faiths, which has become so easy in our time, will make him doubt in the authenticity of his faith. It was all very well for a man who never saw any men of another faith than his own to believe that his own faith was the correct one; but a thinking man need only come in contact, as he now does all the time, with equally good and equally bad men of various denominations, which condemn the doctrines of one another, in order to lose faith in the truth of the religion which he professes. In our time only a very ignorant man or one who is quite indifferent to the questions of life, which are sanctified by religion, can stay in the church faith.

What cunning and what effort must be exerted by the churches, if, in spite of all these conditions which are subversive of faith, they are to continue building churches, celebrating masses, preaching, teaching, converting, and, above all, receiving for it a fat income, like all these priests, pastors, intendants, superintendents, abbots, archdeacons, bishops, and archbishops.

Especial, supernatural efforts are needed. And such efforts, which are strained more and more, are used by the churches. With us, in Russia, they use (in addition to all other means) the simple, coarse violence of the civil power, which is obedient to the church. Persons who depart from the external expression of faith and who give expression to it are either directly punished or deprived of their rights; while persons who strictly adhere to the external forms of faith are rewarded and given rights.

Thus do the Orthodox; but even all other churches, without exception, use for this all such means, of which the chief is what now is called hypnotization.

All the arts, from architecture to poetry, are put into action, to affect the souls of men and to stultify them, and this action takes place without interruption. Particularly evident is this necessity of the hypnotizing action upon men, in order to bring them to a state of stupefaction, in the activity of the Salvation Army, which uses new, unfamiliar methods of horns, drums, songs, banners, uniforms, processions, dances, tears, and dramatic attitudes.

But we are startled by them only because they are new methods. Are not the old methods of the temples, with especial illumination, with gold, splendour, candles, choirs, organs, bells, vestments, lackadaisical sermons, and so forth, the same?

But, no matter how strong this action of hypnotization may be, the chief and most deleterious activity of the churches does not lie in this. The chief, most pernicious activity of the church is the one which is directed to the deception of the children, those very children of whom Christ said that it will be woe to him who shall offend one of these little ones. With the very first awakening of the child, they begin to deceive him and to impress upon him with solemnity what those who impress do not believe in themselves, and they continue to impress him, until the deception, becoming a habit, is engrafted on the child's nature. The child is methodically deceived in the most important matter of life, and when the deception has so grown up with his life that it is difficult to tear it away, there is revealed to him the whole world of science and of reality, which can in no way harmonize with the beliefs instilled in him, and he is left to make the best he can out of these contradictions.

If we should set ourselves the task of entangling a man in such a way that he should not be able with his sound reason to get away from the two opposite world-conceptions, which have been instilled in him since his childhood, we could not invent anything more powerful than what is accomplished in the case of every young man who is educated in our so-called Christian society.

What the churches do to people is terrible, but if we reflect on their condition, we shall find that those men who form the institution of the churches cannot act otherwise. The churches are confronted with a dilemma, – the Sermon on the Mount, or the Nicene Creed, – one excludes the other: if a man sincerely believes in the Sermon on the Mount, the Nicene Creed, and with it the church and its representatives, inevitably lose all meaning and significance for him; but if a man believes in the Nicene Creed, that is, in the church, that is, in those who call themselves its representatives, the Sermon on the Mount will become superfluous to him. And so the churches cannot help but use every possible effort to obscure the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount and to attract people toward itself. Only thanks to the tense activity of the churches in this direction has the influence of the churches held itself until now. Let a church for the shortest time arrest this action upon the masses by means of hypnotizing them and deceiving the children, and people will understand Christ's teaching. But the comprehension of the teaching destroys the churches and their significance. And so the churches do not for a moment interrupt the tense activity and hypnotization of the adults and the deception of the children. And it is this activity of the churches, which instils a false comprehension of Christ's teaching in men, and serves as an obstacle in its comprehension for the majority of so-called believers.

IV

Now I will speak of another putative comprehension of Christianity, which interferes with the correct comprehension of it, – the scientific comprehension.

The churchmen regard as Christianity that conception of it which they have formed, and this comprehension of Christianity they regard as the one indubitably true one.

The men of science regard as Christianity only what the different churches have been professing, and, assuming that these professions exhaust the whole significance of Christianity, they recognize it as a religious teaching which has outlived its time.

To have it made clear how impossible it is with such a view to understand the Christian teaching, we must form an idea of the place which the religions in general and Christianity in particular have in reality occupied in the life of humanity, and of the significance which is ascribed to religion by science.

As an individual man cannot live without having a definite idea of the meaning of his life, and always, though often unconsciously, conforms his acts to this meaning which he ascribes to his life, even so aggregates of men living under the same conditions, – nations cannot help but have a conception about the meaning of their collective life and the activity resulting therefrom. And as an individual, entering into a new age, invariably changes his comprehension of life, and a grown man sees its meaning in something else than in what a child sees it, so an aggregate of people, a nation, inevitably, according to its age, changes its comprehension of life and the activity which results from it.

The difference between the individual and the whole of humanity in this respect consists in this, that while the individual in the determination of the comprehension of life, proper to the new stage of life into which he enters, and in the activity which arises from it, makes use of the indications of men who have lived before him and who have already passed through the period of life upon which he is entering, humanity cannot have these indications, because it all moves along an untrodden path, and there is no one who can tell how life is to be understood, and how one is to act under the new conditions into which it is entering, and in which no one has lived before.

And yet, as a married man with children cannot continue to understand life as he understood it when he was a child, so humanity cannot in connection with all the various changes which have taken place, – the density of the population, and the established intercourse between the nations, and the improvement of the means for struggling against Nature, and the accumulation of science, – continue to understand life as before, but must establish a new concept of life, from which should result the activity which corresponds to that new condition into which it has entered or is about to enter.

To this demand responds the peculiar ability of humanity to segregate certain people who give a new meaning to the whole of human life, – a meaning from which results the whole new activity which is different from the preceding one. The establishment of the new life-conception, which is proper for humanity under the new conditions into which it is entering, and of the activity resulting from it, is what is called religion.

And so religion, in the first place, is not, as science thinks, a phenomenon which at one time accompanied the evolution of humanity, and later became obsolete, but is a phenomenon always inherent in the life of humanity, and is in our time as inevitably inherent in humanity as at any other time. In the second place, religion is always a determination of the activity of the future, and not of the past, and so it is obvious that the investigation of past phenomena can in no way include the essence of religion.

The essence of every religious teaching does not consist in the desire to express the forces of Nature symbolically, or in the fear of them, or in the demand for the miraculous, or in the

external forms of its manifestation, as the men of science imagine. The essence of religion lies in the property of men prophetically to foresee and point out the path of life, over which humanity must travel, in a new definition of the meaning of life, from which also results a new, the whole future activity of humanity.

This property of foreseeing the path on which humanity must travel is in a greater or lesser degree common to all men, but there have always, at all times, been men, in whom this quality has been manifested with particular force, and these men expressed clearly and precisely what was dimly felt by all men, and established a new comprehension of life, from which resulted an entirely new activity, for hundreds and thousands of years.

We know three such conceptions of life: two of them humanity has already outlived, and the third is the one through which we are now passing in Christianity. There are three, and only three, such conceptions, not because we have arbitrarily united all kinds of life-conceptions into these three, but because the acts of men always have for their base one of these three life-conceptions, because we cannot understand life in any other way than by one of these three means.

The three life-conceptions are these: the first – the personal, or animal; the second – the social, or the pagan; and the third – the universal, or the divine.

According to the first life-conception, man's life is contained in nothing but his personality; the aim of his life is the gratification of the will of this personality. According to the second life-conception, man's life is not contained in his personality alone, but in the aggregate and sequence of personalities, – in the tribe, the family, the race, the state; the aim of life consists in the gratification of the will of this aggregate of personalities. According to the third life-conception, man's life is contained neither in his personality, nor in the aggregate and sequence of personalities, but in the beginning and source of life, in God.

These three life-conceptions serve as the foundation of all past and present religions.

The savage recognizes life only in himself, in his personal desires. The good of his life is centred in himself alone. The highest good for him is the greatest gratification of his lust. The prime mover of his life is his personal enjoyment. His religion consists in appeasing the divinity in his favour, and in the worship of imaginary personalities of gods, who live only for personal ends.

A pagan, a social man, no longer recognizes life in himself alone, but in the aggregate of personalities, – in the tribe, the family, the race, the state, – and sacrifices his personal good for these aggregates. The prime mover of his life is glory. His religion consists in the glorification of the heads of unions, – of eponyms, ancestors, kings, and in the worship of gods, the exclusive protectors of his family, his race, his nation, his state.⁹

The man with the divine life-conception no longer recognizes life to consist in his personality, or in the aggregate of personalities (in the family, the race, the people, the country, or the state), but in the source of the everlasting, immortal life, in God; and to do God's will he sacrifices his personal and domestic and social good. The prime mover of his religion is love. And his religion is the worship in deed and in truth of the beginning of everything, of God.

The whole historical life of humanity is nothing but a gradual transition from the personal, the animal life-conception, to the social, and from the social to the divine. The whole history of the ancient nations, which lasted for thousands of years and which came to a conclusion with the history of Rome, is the history of the substitution of the social and the political life-conception for the animal, the personal. The whole history since the time of imperial Rome and the appearance of Christianity has been the history of the substitution of the divine life-conception for the political, and we are passing through it even now.

⁹ The unity of this life-conception is not impaired by the fact that so many various forms of life, as that of the tribe, the family, the race, the state, and even the life of humanity, according to the theoretical speculations of the positivists, are based on this social, or pagan, life-conception. All these various forms of life are based on the same concept that the life of the personality is not a sufficient aim of life and that the meaning of life can be found only in the aggregate of personalities. —*Author's Note.*

It is this last life-conception, and the Christian teaching which is based upon it and which governs our whole life and lies at the foundation of our whole activity, both the practical and the theoretical, that the men of so-called science, considering it in reference to its external signs only, recognize as something obsolete and meaningless for us.

This teaching, which, according to the men of science, is contained only in its dogmatic part, – in the doctrine of the Trinity, the redemption, the miracles, the church, the sacraments, and so forth, – is only one out of a vast number of religions which have arisen in humanity, and now, having played its part in history, is outliving its usefulness, melting in the light of science and true culture.

What is taking place is what in the majority of cases serves as a source of the coarsest human errors, – men who are standing on a lower level of comprehension, coming in contact with phenomena of a higher order, instead of making efforts to understand them, instead of rising to the point of view from which they ought to look upon a subject, judge it from their lower point of view, and that, too, with greater daring and determination the less they understand what they are talking about.

For the majority of scientific men, who view Christ's vital, moral teaching from the lower point of the social conception of life, this teaching is only a very indefinite, clumsy combination of Hindoo asceticism, Stoical and Neo-platonic teachings, and Utopian antisocial reveries, which have no serious significance for our time, and its whole meaning is centred in its external manifestations, – in Catholicism, Protestantism, the dogmas, the struggle with the worldly power. In defining the significance of Christianity according to these phenomena, they are like deaf persons who should judge of the meaning and the worth of music according to the appearance of the motions which the musicians make.

The result of it is this, that all these men, beginning with Comte, Strauss, Spencer, and Renan, who do not understand the meaning of Christ's sermons, who do not understand why they are uttered and for what purpose, who do not even understand the question to which they serve as an answer, who do not even take the trouble to grasp their meaning, if they are inimically inclined, deny outright the rationality of the teaching; but if they wish to be condescending to it, they correct it from the height of their grandeur, assuming that Christ wanted to say precisely what they have in mind, but did not know how to say it. They treat his teaching as, in correcting the words of an interlocutor, self-confident men generally speak to one whom they regard as standing below them, "Yes, what you mean to say is this." This correction is always made in the sense of reducing the higher, divine life-conception to the lower, social conception.

People generally say that the moral teaching of Christianity is good, but exaggerated, – that, in order that it should be absolutely good, we must reject from it what is superfluous, what does not fit in with our structure of life. "For otherwise the teaching, which demands too much, which cannot be carried out, is worse than one which demands from men what is possible and in conformity with their strength," think and assert the wise interpreters of Christianity, repeating what was long ago affirmed and still is affirmed, and could not help but be affirmed, in relation to the Christian teaching, by those who, having failed to comprehend the teacher of it, crucified Him, – by the Jews.

It turns out that before the judgment of the learned of our time, the Jewish law, A tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye, – the law of just retaliation, which was known to humanity five thousand years ago, – is more useful than the law of love which eighteen hundred years ago was preached by Christ in place of this very law of justice.

It turns out that everything which has been done by the men who comprehended Christ's teaching in a direct manner and lived in conformity with such a comprehension, everything which all true Christians, all Christian champions, have done, everything which now transforms the world under the guise of socialism and communism, – is exaggeration, of which it is not worth while to speak.

Men who have been educated in Christianity for eighteen centuries have convinced themselves in the persons of their foremost men, the scholars, that the Christian teaching is a teaching of dogmas, that the vital teaching is a misconception, an exaggeration, which violates the true legitimate demands of morality, which correspond to man's nature, and that the doctrine of justice, which Christ rejected and in the place of which he put his own teaching, is much more profitable for us.

The learned consider the commandment of non-resistance to evil an exaggeration and even madness. If it be rejected, it would be much better, they think, without observing that they are not talking of Christ's teaching at all, but of what presents itself to them as such.

They do not notice that to say that Christ's commandment about non-resistance to evil is an exaggeration is the same as saying that in the theory of the circle the statement about the equality of the radii of a circle is an exaggeration. And those who say so do precisely what a man, who did not have any conception as to what a circle is, would do if he asserted that the demand that all the points on the circumference should be equally distant from the centre is an exaggeration. To advise that the statement concerning the equality of the radii in a circle be rejected or moderated is the same as not understanding what a circle is. To advise that the commandment about non-resistance to evil in the vital teaching of Christ be rejected or moderated means not to understand the teaching.

And those who do so actually do not understand it at all. They do not understand that this teaching is the establishment of a new comprehension of life, which corresponds to the new condition into which men have been entering for these eighteen hundred years, and the determination of the new activity which results from it. They do not believe that Christ wanted to say what he did; or it seems to them that what he said in the Sermon on the Mount and in other passages He said from infatuation, from lack of comprehension, from insufficient development.¹⁰

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink, or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. vi. 25-34).

¹⁰ Here, for example, is a characteristic judgment of the kind in an article of an American periodical, *Arena*, October, 1890. The article is entitled "A New Basis of Church Life." In discussing the significance of the Sermon on the Mount, and especially its non-resistance to evil, the author, who is not obliged, like the ecclesiastic writers, to conceal its meaning, says: "Christ actually preached complete communism and anarchy; but we must know how to look upon Christ in His historical and psychologic significance." [This sentence is not in the English article. —Tr:] "Devout common sense must gradually come to look upon Christ as a philanthropic teacher who, like every enthusiast who ever taught, went to an Utopian extreme of His own philosophy. Every great agitation for the betterment of the world has been led by men who beheld their own mission with such absorbing intensity that they could see little else. It is no reproach to Christ to say that He had the typical reformer's temperament; that His precepts cannot be literally accepted as a complete philosophy of life; and that men are to analyze them reverently, but, at the same time, in the spirit of ordinary, truth-seeking criticism," and so forth. Christ would have liked to speak well, but He did not know how to express Himself as precisely and clearly as we, in the spirit of criticism, and so we will correct him. Everything He said about meekness, sacrifice, poverty, the thoughtlessness for the morrow, He said by chance, having been unable to express himself scientifically. —*Author's Note.*

Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also (Luke xii. 33-34).

Go and sell that thou hast, and follow me, and who hath not forsaken father or mother, or children, or brethren, or fields, or house, cannot be my disciple.

Turn away from thyself, take thy cross for every day, and come after me. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to do His work. Not my will be done, but Thine; not what I want, but what Thou wantest, and not as I want, but as Thou wantest. The life is in this, not to do one's will, but the will of God.

All these propositions seem to men who are standing on a lower life-conception to be an expression of an ecstatic transport, which has no direct applicability to life. And yet these propositions just as strictly result from the Christian conception of life as the tenet about giving up one's labour for the common good, about sacrificing one's life in the defence of one's country, results from the social conception.

Just as a man of the social life-conception says to a savage, "Come to your senses, bethink yourself! The life of your personality cannot be the true life, because it is wretched and transitory. Only the life of the aggregate and of the sequence of personalities, of the tribe, the family, the race, the state, is continued and lives, and so a man must sacrifice his personality for the life of the family, the state." Precisely the same the Christian teaching says to a man of the aggregate, of the social conception of life. "Repent, μετανοεῖτε, that is, bethink yourselves, or else you will perish. Remember that this carnal, personal life, which originated to-day and will be destroyed to-morrow, cannot be made secure in any way, that no external measures, no arrangement of it, can add firmness and rationality to it. Bethink yourselves and understand that the life which you live is not the true life: the life of the family, the life of society, the life of the state will not save you from ruin." The true, rational life is possible for man only in proportion as he can be a participant, not in the family or the state, but in the source of life, the Father; in proportion as he can blend his life with the life of the Father. Such indubitably is the Christian life-comprehension, which may be seen in every utterance of the Gospel.

It is possible not to share this life-conception; it is possible to reject it; it is possible to prove its inexactness and irregularity; but it is impossible to judge of the teaching, without having first grasped the life-conception from which it results; still less possible is it to judge about a subject of a higher order from a lower point of view, to judge of the tower by looking at the foundation. But it is precisely this that the learned men of our time are doing. They do so because they abide in an error, which is like the one of the churchmen, the belief that they are in possession of such methods of the study of the subject that, as soon as these methods, called scientific, are used, there can be no longer any doubt as to the correctness of the comprehension of the subject under advisement.

It is this possession of an instrument of cognition, which they deem infallible, that serves as the chief obstacle in the comprehension of the Christian teaching by unbelievers and so-called scientific men, by whose opinion the vast majority of unbelievers, the so-called cultured men, are guided. From this imaginary comprehension of theirs arise all the errors of the scientific men in respect to the Christian teaching, and especially two strange misconceptions which more than any other impede the correct comprehension of it.

One of these misconceptions is this, that the Christian vital teaching is impracticable, and so is either entirely unobligatory, that is, need not be taken for a guide, or else must be modified and moderated to such an extent as to make it practicable in our society. Another misunderstanding is this, that the Christian teaching of love of God, and so the service of Him, is an obscure, mystical demand, which has no definite object of love, and so must give way to a more precise and comprehensible teaching about loving men and serving humanity.

The first misconception about the impracticableness of the teaching consists in this, that the men of the social comprehension of life, being unable to comprehend the method by means of which the Christian teaching guides men, and taking the Christian indications of perfection to be rules which determine life, think and say that it is impossible to follow Christ's teaching, because a complete fulfilment of this teaching destroys life.

"If a man fulfilled what was preached by Christ, he would destroy his life; and if all men should fulfil it, the whole human race would come to an end," they say.

"If we care not for the morrow, for what we shall eat and drink and be clothed in; if we do not defend our lives; if we do not resist evil with force; if we give our lives for our friends, and observe absolute chastity, no man, nor the whole human race, can exist," they think and say.

And they are quite correct, if we take the indications of perfection, as given by Christ, for rules, which every man is obliged to carry out, just as in the social teaching everybody is obliged to carry out the rule about paying the taxes, about taking part in court, etc.

The misconception consists in this, that Christ's teaching guides men in a different way from the way those teachings guide which are based on a lower life-conception. The teachings of the social life-conception guide only by demanding a precise execution of the rules or laws. Christ's teaching guides men by indicating to them that infinite perfection of the Father in heaven, toward which it is proper for each man to strive voluntarily, no matter at what stage of perfection he may be.

The misconception of people who judge about the Christian teaching from the social point of view consists in this, that they, assuming that the perfection pointed out by Christ may be attained completely, ask themselves (even as they question themselves, assuming that the social laws will be fulfilled) what will happen when all this shall be fulfilled. This assumption is false, because the perfection pointed out by Christ is infinite and can never be attained; and Christ gives His teaching with this in view, that complete perfection will never be attained, but that the striving toward complete, infinite perfection will constantly increase the good of men, and that this good can, therefore, be increased infinitely.

Christ does not teach angels, but men, who live an animal life, who are moved by it. And it is to this animal force of motion that Christ seems to apply a new, a different force of the consciousness of divine perfection, and with this He directs the motion of life along the resultant of two forces.

To assume that human life will go in the direction indicated by Christ is the same as assuming that a boatman, in crossing a rapid river and directing his boat almost against the current, will move in that direction.

Christ recognizes the existence of both sides of the parallelogram, of both the eternal, indestructible forces, of which man's life is composed, – the force of the animal nature and the force of the consciousness of a filial relation to God. Without saying anything of the animal force, which, asserting itself, always remains equal to itself and exists outside of man's power, Christ speaks only of the divine force, calling man to recognize it in the highest degree, to free it as much as possible from what is retarding it, and to bring it to the highest degree of tension.

In this liberation and increase of the force does man's true life, according to Christ's teaching, consist. The true life, according to the previous conditions, consisted in the execution of rules, of the law; according to Christ's teaching, it consists in the greatest approach to the divine perfection, as pointed out to every man and inwardly felt by him, in a greater and ever greater approach toward blending our will with the will of God, a blending toward which a man strives, and which would be a destruction of life as we know it.

Divine perfection is the asymptote of the human life, toward which it always tends and approaches, and which can be attained by it only at infinity.

The Christian teaching seems to exclude the possibility of life only when men take the indication of the ideal to be a rule. It is only then that the demands put forth by Christ's teaching appear to be destructive of life. Without these demands the true life would be impossible.

"Too much should not be demanded," people generally say, in discussing the demands of the Christian teaching. "It is impossible to demand that we should not care for the future, as it says in the Gospel; all that we should do is not to care too much. It is impossible to give everything to the poor; but we should give a certain, definite part to them. It is not necessary to strive after chastity; but debauchery should be avoided. We must not leave our wives and children; but we should not be too much attached to them," and so forth.

But to speak in this manner is the same as telling a man who is crossing a rapid river, and who is directing his course against the current, that it is impossible to cross the river by going against the current, but that to cross it he should row in the direction he wishes to go.

Christ's teaching differs from previous teachings in that it guides men, not by external rules, but by the internal consciousness of the possibility of attaining divine perfection. And in man's soul there are not moderated rules of justice and of philanthropy, but the ideal of the complete, infinite, divine perfection. Only the striving after this perfection deflects the direction of man's life from the animal condition toward the divine, to the extent to which this is possible in this life.

In order to land where you wish, you must direct your course much higher up.

To lower the demands of the ideal means not only to diminish the possibility of perfection, but to destroy the ideal itself. The ideal which operates upon people is not an invented one, but one which is borne in the soul of every man. Only this ideal of the complete, infinite perfection acts upon people and moves them to activity. A moderated perfection loses its power to act upon men's souls.

Christ's teaching only then has force, when it demands full perfection, that is, the blending of God's essence, which abides in the soul of every man, with the will of God, – the union of the son and the Father. Only this liberation of the son of God, who lives in every man, from the animal, and his approximation to the Father form life according to Christ's teaching.

The existence of the animal in man, of nothing but the animal, is not the human life. Life according to the will of God alone is also not the human life. The human life is the resultant from the animal and the divine lives, and the more this resultant approaches the divine life, the more there is of life.

Life, according to the Christian teaching, is a motion toward divine perfection. No condition, according to this teaching, can be higher or lower than another. Every condition, according to this teaching, is only a certain step, indifferent in itself, toward the unattainable perfection, and so in itself forms neither a greater nor a lesser degree of life. The increase of life, according to this teaching, is only an acceleration of motion toward perfection, and so the motion toward perfection of the publican Zacchæus, of the harlot, of the robber on the cross, forms a higher degree of life than the immovable righteousness of the Pharisee. And so there can be no obligatory rules for this teaching. A man who stands on a lower step, in moving toward perfection, lives more morally and better, and better performs the teaching, than a man who stands on a much higher stage of morality, but who does not move toward perfection.

In this sense the lost sheep is dearer to the Father than one which is not lost. The prodigal son, the lost coin which is found again, are dearer than those which were not lost.

The fulfilment of the teaching consists in the motion from oneself toward God. It is evident that for such a fulfilment of the teaching there can be no definite laws and rules. All degrees of perfection and all degrees of imperfection are equal before this teaching; no fulfilment of the laws constitutes a fulfilment of the teaching; and so, for this teaching there are, and there can be, no rules and no laws.

From this radical distinction of Christ's teaching as compared with previous teachings, which are based on the social conception of life, there results the difference between the social and the Christian commandments. The social commandments are for the most part positive, prescribing certain acts, justifying men, giving them righteousness. But the Christian commandments (the

commandment of love is not a commandment in the strict sense of the word, but an expression of the very essence of the teaching) – the five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount – are all negative, and they all show only what men may not do at a certain stage of human development. These commandments are, as it were, signals on the infinite road to perfection, toward which humanity walks, signals of that stage of perfection which is possible at a given period of the development of humanity.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ has expressed the eternal ideal toward which it is proper for men to tend, and that degree of its attainment which can be reached even in our time.

The ideal consists in having no ill-will against any one, in calling forth no ill-will, in loving all; but the commandment, below which, in the attainment of this ideal, it is absolutely possible not to descend, consists in not offending any one with a word. And this forms the first commandment.

The ideal is complete chastity, even in thought; the commandment which points out the degree of attainment, below which, in the attainment of this ideal, it is absolutely possible not to descend, is the purity of the marital life, the abstaining from fornication. And this forms the second commandment.

The ideal is not to care for the future, to live only in the present; the commandment which points out the degree of the attainment, below which it is absolutely possible not to descend is not to swear, not to promise anything to men. And this is the third commandment.

The ideal is never, under any condition, to make use of violence; the commandment which points out the degree below which it is absolutely possible not to descend is not to repay evil with evil, but to suffer insult, to give up one's cloak. And this is the fourth commandment.

The ideal is to love our enemies, who hate us; the commandment which points out the degree of the attainment, below which it is possible not to descend, is to do no evil to our enemies, to speak well of them, to make no distinction between them and our fellow citizens.

All these commandments are indications of what we are fully able not to do on the path of striving after perfection, of what we ought to work over now, of what we must by degrees transfer into the sphere of habit, into the sphere of the unconscious. But these commandments fail to form a teaching, and do not exhaust it, and form only one of the endless steps in the approximation toward perfection.

After these commandments there must and will follow higher and higher ones on the path to perfection, which is indicated by the teaching.

And so it is the peculiarity of the Christian teaching that it makes higher demands than those which are expressed in these commandments, but under no condition minimizes the demands, either of the ideal itself, or of these commandments, as is done by people who judge the teaching of Christianity free from the standpoint of the social conception of life.

Such is one misconception of the scientific men concerning the meaning and significance of Christ's teaching; the other, which flows from the same source, consists in the substitution of the love and service of men, of humanity, for the Christian demand for loving God and serving Him.

The Christian teaching of loving God and serving Him, and (only in consequence of this love and this service) of the love and service of our neighbour, appears obscure, mystical, and arbitrary to the men of science, and they completely exclude the demand of love of God and of serving Him, assuming that the teaching about this love of men, of humanity, is much more intelligible and firm and better grounded.

The men of science teach theoretically that the good and sensible life is only the life of serving the whole of humanity, and in this alone do they see the meaning of the Christian teaching; to this teaching do they reduce the Christian teaching; for this their teaching do they seek a confirmation in the Christian teaching, assuming that their teaching and the Christian teaching are one and the same.

This opinion is quite faulty. The Christian teaching, and that of the positivists, communists, and all the preachers of a universal brotherhood of men, which is based on the profitableness of such a brotherhood, have nothing in common among themselves, and differ from one another more especially in this, that the Christian teaching has firm, clear foundations in the human soul, while the teaching of the love of humanity is only a theoretical deduction from analogy.

The teaching of the love of humanity alone has for its basis the social conception of life.

The essence of the social conception of life consists in the transference of the meaning of our personal lives into the life of the aggregate of personalities, – the tribe, the family, the race, the state. This transference has taken place easily and naturally in its first forms, in the transference of the meaning of life from the personality to the tribe, the family. But the transference to the race or nation is more difficult and demands a special education for it; and the transference of the consciousness to the state forms the limit of such a transference.

It is natural for any one to love himself, and every person loves himself without any special incitement; to love my tribe, which supports and defends me, to love my wife, the joy and helpmate of my life, my children, the pleasure and hope of my life, and my parents, who have given me life and an education, is natural: and this kind of love, though far from being as strong as the love of self, is met with quite frequently.

To love one's race, one's nation, for the sake of oneself, of one's pride, though not so natural, is still to be met with. The love of one's nation, which is of the same race, tongue, and faith with one, is still possible, though this sentiment is far from being as strong as the love of self, or even of family and race; but the love of a country, like Turkey, Germany, England, Austria, Russia, is almost an impossible thing, and, in spite of the intensified education in this direction, is only assumed and does not exist in reality. With this aggregate there ends for man the possibility of transferring his consciousness and of experiencing in this fiction any immediate sensation. But the positivists and all the preachers of a scientific brotherhood, who do not take into consideration the weakening of the sentiment in proportion as the subject is widened, continue the discussion theoretically along the same direction: "If," they say, "it was more advantageous for the personality to transfer its consciousness to the tribe, the family, and then to the nation, the state, it will be still more advantageous to transfer the consciousness to the whole aggregate of humanity, and for all to live for humanity, just as individuals live for the family, the state."

Theoretically it really comes out that way.

Since the consciousness and the love of personality are transferred to the family, from the family to the race, the nation, the state, it would be quite logical for men, to save themselves from struggle and calamities, which are due to the division of humanity into nations and states, most naturally to transfer their love to humanity. This would seem to be the most logical thing, and this is theoretically advocated by men, who do not observe that love is a sentiment which one may have, but cannot preach, and that, besides, for love there must be an object, whereas humanity is not an object, but only a fiction.

The tribe, the family, even the state, are not invented by men, but were formed naturally like a swarm of bees or ants, and actually exist. A man who loves his family for the sake of his animal personality, knows whom he loves: Anna, Mary, John, Peter, and so forth. A man who loves a race and is proud of it, knows that he loves the whole race of the Guelphs, or all the Ghibellines; he who loves the state knows that he loves France as far as the Rhine and the Pyrenees, and its capital, Paris, and its history, and so forth. But what does a man love, when he loves humanity? There is the state, the nation; there is the abstract conception – man; but there is not, and there cannot be, a real conception of humanity.

Humanity? Where is the limit of humanity? Where does it end and where does it begin? Does humanity stop short of a savage, an idiot, an alcoholic, an insane person? If we are going to draw a line of demarcation for humanity, so as to exclude the lower representatives of the human race,

where are we going to draw it? Are we going to exclude the negroes, as the Americans do, and the Hindoos, as some English do, and the Jews, as some do? But if we are going to include all men without exception, why include men only, and not the higher animals, many of whom stand higher than the lower representatives of the human race?

We do not know humanity as an external object, – we do not know its limits. Humanity is a fiction, and it cannot be loved. It would indeed be very convenient, if men could love humanity just as they love the family; it would be very convenient, as the communists talk of doing, to substitute the communal for the competitive tendency of human activity, and the universal for the individual, so that every man may be for all, and all for every man, only there are no motives whatever for it. The positivists, the communists, and all the preachers of the scientific brotherhood preach the widening of that love which men have for themselves and for their families and for the state, so as to embrace all humanity, forgetting that the love which they advocate is the personal love, which, by spreading out thinner, could extend to the family; which, by spreading out still thinner, could extend to the natural country of birth, which completely vanishes as soon as it reaches an artificial state, as Austria, Turkey, England, and which we are not even able to imagine, when we come to humanity, an entirely mystical subject.

"Man loves himself (his animal life), loves his family, loves even his country. Why should he not love also humanity? How nice that would be! By the way, this is precisely what Christianity teaches."

Thus think the preachers of the positivist, communistic, socialistic brotherhoods. It would indeed be very nice, but it cannot be, because love which is based on the personal and the social conception of life cannot go beyond the state.

The error of judgment consists in this, that the social life-conception, on which is based the love of family and of country, is built on the love of personality, and that this love, being transferred from the personality to the family, the race, the nationality, the state, keeps growing weaker and weaker, and in the state reaches its extreme limit, beyond which it cannot go.

The necessity for widening the sphere of love is incontestable; but at the same time this very necessity for its widening in reality destroys the possibility of love and proves the insufficiency of the personal, the human love.

And here the preachers of the positivist, communistic, socialistic brotherhoods, to succour the human love, which has proved insufficient, propose the Christian love, – in its consequences alone, and not in its foundations: they propose the love of humanity alone, without the love of God.

But there can be no such love. There exists no motive for it. Christian love results only from the Christian conception of life, according to which the meaning of life consists in the love of God and in serving Him.

By a natural progression, from the love of self to the love of family, of the race, of the nation, of the state, the social conception of life has brought men to the consciousness of the necessity for a love of humanity, which has no limits and blends with everything in existence, – to something which evokes no sensations in man; it has brought them to a contradiction, which cannot be solved by the social conception of life.

Only the Christian teaching in all its significance, by giving a new meaning to life, solves it. Christianity recognizes the love of self, and of the family, and of the nation, and of humanity, – not only of humanity, but of everything living, of everything in existence; it recognizes the necessity for an endless widening of the sphere of love; but the object of this love it does not find outside of self, or in the aggregate of personalities, – in the family, the race, the state, humanity, in the whole external world, but in oneself, in one's personality, – which, however, is a divine personality, the essence of which is the same love, to the necessity of widening which the animal personality was brought, in saving itself from the consciousness of its perdition.

The difference between the Christian teaching and what preceded it is this, that the preceding social teaching said: "Live contrary to your nature (meaning only the animal nature), subordinate it to the external law of the family, the society, the state;" but Christianity says: "Live in accordance with your nature (meaning the divine nature), subordinating it to nothing, – neither to your own, nor to anybody else's animal nature, – and you will attain what you are striving after by subordinating your external nature to external laws."

The Christian teaching takes man back to the primitive consciousness of self, not of self – the animal, but of self – God, the divine spark, of self – the son of God, of just such a God as the Father himself, but included in an animal integument. And the recognition of self as this son of God, whose chief quality is love, satisfies also all those demands for the widening of the sphere of love, to which the man of the social conception of life was brought. There, with a greater and ever greater widening of the sphere of love for the salvation of the personality, love was a necessity and was applied to certain objects, – self, the family, society, humanity; with the Christian conception of life, love is not a necessity and is not adapted to anything, but is an essential quality of man's soul. Man does not love because it is advantageous for him to love this man or these men, but because love is the essence of his soul, – because he cannot help loving.

The Christian teaching consists in pointing out to man that the essence of his soul is love, that his good is derived not from the fact that he will love this or that man, but from the fact that he will love the beginning of everything, God, whom he recognizes in himself through love, and so will love everybody and everything.

In this does the fundamental difference between the Christian teaching and the teaching of the positivists and of all the theorists of the non-Christian universal brotherhood consist.

Such are the two chief misconceptions concerning the Christian teaching, from which originate the majority of the false opinions in regard to it. One is, that, like the preceding teachings, Christ's teaching inculcates rules, which men are obliged to follow, and that these rules are impracticable; the other is, that the whole significance of Christianity consists in the teaching about the advantageous cohabitation of humanity, as one family, for which, without mentioning the love of God, it is necessary only to follow the rule of love toward humanity.

The false opinion of the scientific men, that the teaching of the supernatural forms the essence of the Christian teaching, and that Christ's vital teaching is impracticable, together with the misconception which arises from this false opinion, forms the second cause why Christianity is not understood by the men of our time.

V

There are many causes for the failure to comprehend Christ's teaching. One cause lies in this, that men assume that they understand the teaching, when they decide, as the churchmen do, that it was transmitted to us in a supernatural manner; or, as the scientific men do, that they understand it, when they have studied a part of those external phenomena in which it is expressed. Another cause of a failure to comprehend lies in the misconceptions as to the impracticability of the teaching and as to this, that it ought to give way to the teaching about the love of humanity; but the chief cause which has engendered all these misconceptions is this, that Christ's teaching is considered to be such as can be accepted, or not, without changing one's life.

The men who are accustomed to the existing order of things, who love it and are afraid to change it, try to comprehend the teaching as a collection of revelations and rules, which may be accepted, without changing their lives, whereas Christ's teaching is not merely a teaching about rules which a man may follow, but the elucidation of a new meaning of life, which determines the whole, entirely new activity of humanity for the period upon which it is entering.

Human life moves, passes, like the life of the individual, and every age has its corresponding life-conception, and this life-conception is inevitably accepted by men. Those men who do not consciously accept the life-conception proper for their age are brought to it unconsciously. What takes place with the change of views on life in the case of individuals, takes place also with the change of the views on life in the case of nations and of all humanity. If a man with a family continues to be guided in his activity by a childish comprehension of life, his life will become so hard for him that he will involuntarily seek another comprehension of life, and will gladly accept the one which is proper for his age.

The same is now taking place in our humanity in the transition from the pagan conception of life to the Christian, which is now going on. The social man of our time is brought by life itself to the necessity of renouncing the pagan conception of life, which is no longer proper for the present age of humanity, and of submitting to the demands of the Christian teaching, the truths of which, no matter how distorted and misinterpreted they may be, are still known to him and alone furnish a solution to those contradictions in which he is losing himself.

If the demands of the Christian teaching seem strange and even perilous to the man of the social life-conception, the demands of the social teaching anciently seemed just as incomprehensible and perilous to a savage, when he did not yet fully comprehend them and was unable to foresee their consequences.

"It is irrational for me to sacrifice my peace or even my life," says the savage, "in order to defend something incomprehensible, intangible, conventional, – the family, the race, the country, and, above all else, it is dangerous to give myself over to the disposition of a foreign power."

But the time came when the savage, on the one hand, comprehended, however dimly, the significance of the social life, the significance of its prime mover, – the public approval or condemnation, – glory; on the other hand, when the sufferings of his personal life became so great that he no longer continued to believe in the truth of his former conception of life, and accepted the social, the political teaching and submitted to it.

The same now takes place with the social, the political man.

"It is irrational for me," says the social man, "to sacrifice my good, the good of my family, my country, for the fulfilment of the conditions of some higher law, which demands from me the renunciation of the most natural and the best sentiments of love for myself, my family, my country, and, above all, it is dangerous to reject the security of life, which is given by the political structure."

But the time comes when, on the one hand, the dim consciousness in his soul of a higher law of love for God and for his neighbour, and, on the other, the sufferings which arise from

the contradictions of life, compel him to reject the social life-conception and to accept the new, Christian conception of life, which is offered to him, and which solves all the contradictions and removes the sufferings of his life. And this time has now come.

To us, who thousands of years ago experienced the transition from the animal, personal life-conception to the social one, it seems that that transition was necessary and natural, and this, the one through which we have been passing these eighteen hundred years, is arbitrary, unnatural, and terrible. But that only seems so to us, because the other transition is already accomplished, and its activity has already passed into the subconscious, while the present transition is not yet accomplished, and we have to accomplish it consciously.

The social life-conception entered into the consciousness of men through centuries and millenniums, passed through several forms, and has now passed for humanity into the sphere of the subconscious, which is transmitted through heredity, education, and habit, and so it seems natural to us. But five thousand years ago it seemed to men just as unnatural and terrible as now the Christian teaching seems to us in its true meaning.

It now seems to us that the demands of the Christian teaching for a universal brotherhood, abolition of nationalities, absence of property, the apparently so strange non-resistance to evil, are impossible demands. But just so strange, thousands of years ago, seemed the demands, not only of the state, but also of the family, as, for example, the demand that the parents should support their children, and the young – the old, and that husband and wife should be true to one another. Still more strange, even senseless, seemed the political demands, – that the citizens should submit to the powers that be, pay taxes, go to war in the defence of their country, and so forth. It now seems to us that all such demands are simple, intelligible, natural, and have nothing mystical or even strange about them; but five or three thousand years ago, these demands seemed impossible.

The social life-conception served as a basis for religions for the very reason that, when it manifested itself to men, it seemed to them quite unintelligible, mystical, and supernatural. Now, since we have outlived this phase of the life of humanity, we understand the rational causes of the union of men in families, communes, states; but in antiquity the demands for such a union were manifested in the name of the supernatural, and were confirmed by it.

The patriarchal religion deified the families, races, nations: the political religions deified kings and states. Even now the majority of the men of little culture, such as our peasants, who call the Tsar an earthly God, submit to the social laws, not from a rational consciousness of their necessity, not because they have a conception of the idea of the state, but from a religious sentiment.

Even so now the Christian teaching represents itself to the men of the social, or pagan, world-conception in the form of a supernatural religion, whereas in reality there is in it nothing mysterious, or mystical, or supernatural; it is nothing but the teaching about life, which corresponds to that stage of the material development, to that age, in which humanity is, and which must therefore inevitably be accepted by it.

The time will come, and is already at hand, when the Christian foundations of life, equality, brotherhood of men, community of possession, non-resistance to evil, will become as natural and as simple as the foundations of the family, the social, and the political life now appear to us.

Neither man nor humanity can in their motion turn back. The social, family, and political life-conceptions have been outlived by men, and it is necessary to go ahead and accept the higher life-conception, which indeed is being done now.

This motion takes place from two sides, consciously, in consequence of spiritual causes, and unconsciously, in consequence of material causes.

Just as the individual seldom changes his life merely in accordance with the indications of reason, but as a rule, in spite of the new meaning and the new aims indicated by reason, continues to live his former life and changes it only when his life becomes entirely contradictory to his consciousness, and, therefore, agonizing, so also humanity, having come through its religious

guides to know the new meaning of life, the new aims, toward which it must tend, even after this knowledge continues for a long time, in the case of the majority of men, to live the previous life, and is guided to the acceptance of a new life-conception only through the impossibility of continuing the former life.

In spite of the demands for the change of life, as cognized and expressed by the religious guides and accepted by the wisest men, the majority of men, in spite of the religious relation to these guides, that is, the faith in their teaching, continue in the more complex life to be guided by the previous teaching, just as a man of a family would act, if, knowing how he ought to live at his age, he should from habit and frivolity continue to live a child's life.

It is this that takes place in the matter of the transition of humanity from one age to another, such as is now going on. Humanity has outgrown its social, political age, and has entered upon a new one. It knows the teaching which ought to be put at the foundation of the life of this new age, but from inertia continues to hold on to the previous forms of life. From this lack of correspondence between the life-conception and the practice of life there arises a series of contradictions and sufferings, which poison our life and demand its change.

We need only to compare the practice of life with its theory, in order that we may be frightened at the crying contradiction of the conditions of life and of our consciousness, in which we live.

Our whole life is one solid contradiction to everything we know and consider necessary and right. This contradiction is in everything, – in the economic, the political, the international life. As though forgetting what we know, and for a time putting aside what we believe in (we cannot help but believe, because this constitutes our only foundations of life), we do everything contrary to what our conscience and our common sense demand of us.

In economic, political, and international relations we are guided by those foundations which were useful to men three and five thousand years ago, and which directly contradict our present consciousness and those conditions of life in which we now are.

It was well enough for a man of antiquity to live amidst a division of men into slaves and masters, when he believed that this division was from God, and that it could not be otherwise. But is a similar division possible in our day?

A man of the ancient world could consider himself in the right to use the benefits of this world to the disadvantage of other men, causing them to suffer for generations, because he believed that men are born of various breeds, noble and base, of the generation of Japheth and of Ham. Not only the greatest sages of the world, the teachers of humanity, Plato, Aristotle, justified the existence of slaves and proved the legality of it, but even three centuries ago men who wrote of the imaginary society of the future, of Utopia, could not imagine it without slaves.

The men of antiquity, and even of the Middle Ages, believed, believed firmly, that men are not equal, that only the Persians, only the Greeks, only the Romans, only the French were real men. But those men who in our time champion aristocratism and patriotism do not believe, cannot believe, in what they say.

We all know, and we cannot help but know, even if we have never heard or read this thought clearly expressed and have never expressed it ourselves, we, having imbibed this consciousness, which is borne in the Christian atmosphere, know with our whole heart, and we cannot help but know, that fundamental truth of the Christian teaching, that we all are the sons of one Father, all of us, no matter where we may live or what language we may speak, – that we are all brothers and are subject only to the law of love, which by our common Father is implanted in our hearts.

No matter what the manner of thought and degree of culture of a man of our time may be, be he a cultured liberal of any shade whatever, be he a philosopher of any camp, be he a scientific man, an economist, of any school, be he an uncultured, even a religious man of any confession of faith, – every man of our time knows that all men have the same right to life and to the benefits of this world, that no man is better or worse than any one else, that all men are equal. Everybody

knows this with absolute certainty and with his whole being, and at the same time not only sees all about him the division of men into two castes: one, which is working, is oppressed, in need, in suffering, and the other, idle, oppressing, and living in luxury and pleasure, – he not only sees this, but involuntarily from one side or another takes part in this division of men, which his reason rejects, and he cannot help but suffer from the consciousness of such a contradiction and from participation in it.

Be he master or slave, a man of our time cannot help but experience a constant agonizing contradiction between his consciousness and reality, and sufferings which arise from it.

The working masses, the great majority of people, suffering from the constant, all-absorbing, senseless, dawnless labour and sufferings, suffer most of all from the consciousness of the crying contradiction between what exists and what ought to be, as the result of everything which is professed by them and by those who have placed them in this position and maintain them in it.

They know that they are in slavery, and are perishing in want and darkness, in order to serve the lust of the minority, which keeps them in slavery. They know this and give expression to it. And this consciousness not only increases their sufferings, but even forms the essence of their sufferings.

The ancient slave knew that he was a slave by nature, but our workman, feeling himself to be a slave, knows that he should not be a slave, and so experiences the torments of Tantalus, eternally wishing for and not receiving what not only could, but even should be. The sufferings of the working classes which result from the contradiction between what is and what ought to be, are increased tenfold by the envy and hatred which result from them.

A workman of our time, even though his work may be lighter than that of an ancient slave and he may have attained an eight-hour work-day and a wage of three dollars per day, will not cease suffering, because, in manufacturing articles which he will not make use of, and working, not for himself and at his pleasure, but from necessity, for whims of luxurious and idle people in general and for the enrichment of one man, the rich owner of the factory or plant, in particular, he knows that all this is taking place in a world in which not only they have accepted the scientific proposition that only work is wealth, that the exploitation of other men's labour is unjust, illegal, amenable to punishment by law, but also they profess Christ's teaching, according to which all are brothers, and a man's worth and merit consists only in serving his neighbour, and not in making use of him.

He knows all this, and he cannot help but suffer torments from this crying contradiction between what ought to be and what actually exists. "From all the data and from everything which I know all men profess," the labouring man says to himself, "I ought to be free, equal to all other men, and loved; but I am a slave, – I am humiliated and hated." And he himself hates and seeks for means to save himself from this position, to throw off his foe, who is pressing down on him, and himself to get on top of him. They say, "The working men are not right in their desire to take the place of the capitalists, nor the poor in their desire to take the place of the rich." This is not true: the working men and the poor would be in the wrong, if they wished for it in a world in which slaves and masters, the rich and the poor, are established by God; but they wish for it in a world in which is professed the Gospel teaching, the first proposition of which is the filial relation of men to God, and so the brotherhood and equality of all men. And no matter how much men may try, it is impossible to conceal the fact that one of the first conditions of a Christian life is love, not in words, but in work.

In a still greater contradiction and in still greater sufferings lives the man of the so-called cultured class. Every such man, if he believes in anything, believes, if not in the brotherhood of men, at least in humanitarianism; if not in humanitarianism, at least in justice; if not in justice, at least in science, – and with all that knows that his whole life is built on conditions which are quite the reverse of all that, of all the tenets of Christianity, and humanity, and justice, and science.

He knows that all the habits in which he is brought up, and the deprivation of which would be a torment for him, can be gratified only by the painful, often perilous labour of oppressed

working men, that is, by the most palpable, coarse violation of those principles of Christianity, humanitarianism, justice, and even science (I mean the demands of political economy), which he professes. He professes the principles of brotherhood, humanitarianism, justice, science, and yet lives in such a way that he needs that oppression of the labouring men which he denies, and even in such a way that his whole life is an exploitation of this oppression, and not only does he live in this way, but also he directs his activity to the maintenance of this order of things, which is directly opposed to everything in which he believes.

We are all brothers, and yet every morning my brother or my sister carries out my vessel. We are all brothers, and I need every morning my cigar, sugar, a mirror, and so forth, objects in the manufacture of which my brothers and my sisters, who are my equals, have been losing their health, and I employ these articles and even demand them. We are all brothers, and I live by working in a bank, or in a business house, or a shop, in order to make all the wares which my brothers need more expensive for them. We are all brothers, and yet I live by receiving a salary for arraigning, judging, and punishing a thief or a prostitute, whose existence is conditioned by the whole composition of my life, and who, I know myself, ought not to be punished, but corrected. We are all brothers, and I live by receiving a salary for collecting the taxes from poor working men, to be used for the luxury of the idle and the rich. We are all brothers, and I receive a salary for preaching to people what is supposed to be the Christian religion, in which I do not believe myself, and which deprives them of the possibility of finding out the real faith. I receive a salary as a priest, a bishop, for deceiving people in what is the most important matter for them. We are all brothers, but I give to the poor my pedagogical, medical, literary labours for money only. We are all brothers, but I receive a salary for preparing myself to commit murder, studying how to kill, or making a gun, powder, fortresses.

The whole life of our higher classes is one solid contradiction, which is the more agonizing, the more sensitive man's conscience is.

The man with a sensitive conscience cannot help but suffer, if he lives this life. There is one means by which he can free himself from this suffering, – it consists in drowning his conscience; but even if such men succeed in drowning their conscience, they cannot drown their terror.

Insensitive people of the higher, the oppressing classes, and those who have drowned their consciences, if they do not suffer from their consciences, suffer from fear and hatred. Nor can they help but suffer. They know of that hatred against them which exists, and cannot help but exist, among the labouring classes; and they know that the working men know that they are deceived and outraged, and they are beginning to organize for the purpose of throwing off the oppression and retaliating upon the oppressors. The higher classes see the unions, strikes, the First of May, and they feel the calamity which is threatening them, and this terror poisons their life. They feel the calamity which is threatening them, and the terror which they experience passes into a feeling of self-defence and hatred. They know that if they weaken for a moment in their struggle with the slaves oppressed by them, they will themselves perish, because the slaves are enraged, and this rage is growing with every day of the oppression. The oppressors cannot stop oppressing, even if they should wish to do so. They know that they themselves will perish, the moment they stop or even weaken in their oppressions. And they do oppress, in spite of their seeming concern for the welfare of the labouring people, for an eight-hour day, for the prohibition to employ children and women, for pensions and rewards. All this is a deception or a provision for eliciting work from the slave; but the slave remains a slave, and the master, who could not live without the slave, is less than ever prepared to free him.

The ruling classes are, in relation to the workingmen, in the position of a man who is astride a man whom he holds down and does not let go of, not so much because he does not want to let go of him, as because he knows that he need but for a moment let go of the subdued man, and the subdued man will cut his throat, because the subdued man is enraged and has a knife in his hand. And so, whether they be sensitive or not, our wealthy classes cannot enjoy the good things which

they have taken from the poor, as the ancients did, who believed in their right. Their whole life and all their pleasures are poisoned by rebukes of conscience or by terror.

Such is the economical contradiction. More striking still is the political contradiction.

All men are above all else educated in the habits of obedience to the laws of the state. The whole life of the men of our time is determined by the law of the state. A man marries or gets a divorce, educates his children, even professes a faith (in many states) in accordance with the law. What is this law, which determines the whole life of men? Do the men believe in this law? Do they consider it to be true? Not in the least. In the majority of cases, the men of our time do not believe in the justice of this law, despise it, and yet obey it. It was all very well for the men of antiquity to carry out their laws. They believed firmly that their law (which for the most part was also religious) was the one true law which all men must obey. But we? We know, and we cannot help but know, that the law of our state is not only not the one eternal law, but that it is only one of many laws of various countries, equally imperfect, and frequently and palpably false and unjust, and widely discussed in the newspapers. It was all very well for a Jew to submit to his laws, when he had no doubt but that they were written by God's finger; or, for a Roman, when he thought that the nymph Egeria had written his laws; or even when they believed that the kings who gave the laws were the anointed of the Lord, or even that the legislative bodies had a desire to find the best laws, and were able to do so. But we know how laws are made; we have all been behind the scenes; we all know that laws are the results of greed, deception, the struggle of parties, – that in them there is and there can be no true justice. And so the men of our time cannot believe that obedience to civil or political laws would satisfy the demands of the rationality of human nature. Men have known for a long time that it is not sensible to obey a law of the correctness of which there can be any doubt, and so they cannot help but suffer, if they obey a law the rationality and obligatoriness of which they do not acknowledge.

A man cannot help but suffer, when his whole life is determined in advance by laws which he must obey under the menace of punishment, and in the rationality and justice of which he does not believe, and the unnaturalness, cruelty, injustice of which he clearly recognizes. We recognize the uselessness of custom-houses and import duties, and we must pay the duties; we recognize the uselessness of the expenses for the support of royal courts and many governmental offices; we recognize the harmfulness of the church propaganda, and we must contribute to the support of these institutions; we recognize the cruelty and unscrupulousness of the penalties imposed by courts of justice, and we must take part in them; we recognize the irregularity and harmfulness of the distribution of land-ownership, and we must submit to it; we do not recognize the indispensableness of armies and of war, and must bear terrible burdens for the maintenance of armies and the waging of wars, and so forth.

But these contradictions are as nothing in comparison with the contradiction which has now arisen among men in their international relations, and which, under threat of ruining both human reason and human life, demands a solution. This is the contradiction between the Christian conscience and war.

We are all Christian nations, who live the same spiritual life, so that every good, fruitful thought, which springs up in one corner of the earth, is at once communicated to the whole Christian world, evoking similar sensations of joy and pride, independently of nationality; we, who not only love the thinkers, benefactors, poets, scholars of other nations, but also pride ourselves on the exploit of a Damien, as though it were our own; we, who just love the men of other nationalities, – the French, the Germans, the Americans, the English; we, who not only respect their qualities, but rejoice when we meet them, who give them a smile of recognition, who not only could not regard a war with them as something to be proud of, but who could not even think without horror that any disagreement may arise between these men and us, – we are all called to take part in murder, which must inevitably take place, to-morrow, if not to-day.

It was all very well for a Jew, a Greek, a Roman not only to defend the independence of his nation by means of murder, but by the means of murder also to cause other nations to submit to him, for he believed firmly that his nation was the one true, good, kind nation, which was loved by God, and that all the other nations were Philistines, barbarians. Even the men of the Middle Ages and the men of the end of the last and the beginning of this century could have believed so. But we, no matter how much we may be teased to do so, can no longer believe in this, and this contradiction is so terrible for the men of our time that it is impossible to live, if we do not destroy it.

"We live in a time which is full of contradictions," Count Komárovski, professor of international law, writes in his learned treatise. "In the press of all countries there is constantly shown a universal tendency toward peace, toward its necessity for all nations. In the same sense express themselves the representatives of governments, as private individuals and as official organs, in parliamentary debates, in diplomatic exchanges of opinion, and even in international treaties. At the same time, however, the governments annually increase the military forces of their countries, impose new taxes, make loans, and leave to future generations, as a legacy, the obligation to bear the blunders of the present senseless politics. What a crying contradiction between words and deeds!

"Of course, the governments, to justify these measures, point to the exclusively defensive character of all these expenditures and armaments, but none the less it remains a puzzle for every unbiassed man, whence we are to expect attacks, since all the great powers unanimously in their politics pursue the one aim of defence. In reality this looks as though each of these powers waited every moment to be attacked by another, and these are the consequences, – universal distrust and a preternatural endeavour of one power to surpass the force of the others. Such an emulation in itself increases the danger of war: the nations cannot for any length of time stand the intensified arming, and sooner or later will prefer war to all the disadvantages of the present condition and constant menace. Thus the most insignificant cause will be sufficient to make the fire of a universal war flame up in the whole of Europe. It is incorrect to think that such a crisis can cure us of the political and economical calamities which oppress us. Experience from the wars which have been waged in recent years teaches us that every war has only sharpened the hostility of the nations, increased the burden and the unendurableness of the pressure of militarism, and made the politico-economic condition of Europe more hopeless and complex."

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