

Tolstoy Leo

«The Kingdom of God Is Within You». Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as...



Leo Tolstoy

**«The Kingdom of God Is
Within You». Christianity
Not as a Mystic Religion
but as a New Theory of Life**

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Tolstoy L.

«The Kingdom of God Is Within You». Christianity Not as a
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Содержание

CHAPTER I	7
CHAPTER II	20
CHAPTER III	29
CHAPTER IV	46
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	49

Count Leo Tolstoy

«The Kingdom of God Is Within You» / Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as a New Theory of Life

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The book I have had the privilege of translating is, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable studies of the social and psychological condition of the modern world which has appeared in Europe for many years, and its influence is sure to be lasting and far reaching. Tolstoy's genius is beyond dispute. The verdict of the civilized world has pronounced him as perhaps the greatest novelist of our generation. But the philosophical and religious works of his later years have met with a somewhat indifferent reception. They have been much talked about, simply because they were his work, but, as Tolstoy himself complains, they have never been seriously discussed. I hardly think that he will have to repeat the complaint in regard to the present volume. One may disagree with his views, but no one can seriously deny the originality, boldness, and depth of the social conception which he develops with such powerful logic. The novelist has shown in this book the religious fervor and spiritual insight of the prophet; yet one is pleased to recognize that the artist is not wholly lost in the thinker. The subtle intuitive perception of the psychological basis of the social position, the analysis of the frame of mind of oppressors and oppressed, and of the intoxication of Authority and Servility, as well as the purely descriptive passages in the last chapter – these could only have come from the author of "War and Peace."

The book will surely give all classes of readers much to think of, and must call forth much criticism. It must be refuted by those who disapprove of its teaching, if they do not want it to have great influence.

One cannot of course anticipate that English people, slow as they are to be influenced by ideas, and instinctively distrustful of all that is logical, will take a leap in the dark and attempt to put Tolstoy's theory of life into practice. But one may at least be sure that his destructive criticism of the present social and political *régime* will become a powerful force in the work of disintegration and social reconstruction which is going on around us. Many earnest thinkers who, like Tolstoy, are struggling to find their way out of the contradictions of our social order will hail him as their spiritual guide. The individuality of the author is felt in every line of his work, and even the most prejudiced cannot resist the fascination of his genuineness, sincerity, and profound earnestness. Whatever comes from a heart such as his, swelling with anger and pity at the sufferings of humanity, cannot fail to reach the hearts of others. No reader can put down the book without feeling himself better and more truth-loving for having read it.

Many readers may be disappointed with the opening chapters of the book. Tolstoy disdains all attempt to captivate the reader. He begins by laying what he considers to be the logical foundation of his doctrines, stringing together quotations from little-known theological writers, and he keeps his own incisive logic for the later part of the book.

One word as to the translation. Tolstoy's style in his religious and philosophical works differs considerably from that of his novels. He no longer cares about the form of his work, and his style is often slipshod, involved, and diffuse. It has been my aim to give a faithful reproduction of the original.

Constance Garnett.

January, 1894.

PREFACE

In the year 1884 I wrote a book under the title "What I Believe," in which I did in fact make a sincere statement of my beliefs.

In affirming my belief in Christ's teaching, I could not help explaining why I do not believe, and consider as mistaken, the Church's doctrine, which is usually called Christianity.

Among the many points in which this doctrine falls short of the doctrine of Christ I pointed out as the principal one the absence of any commandment of non-resistance to evil by force. The perversion of Christ's teaching by the teaching of the Church is more clearly apparent in this than in any other point of difference.

I know – as we all do – very little of the practice and the spoken and written doctrine of former times on the subject of non-resistance to evil. I knew what had been said on the subject by the fathers of the Church – Origen, Tertullian, and others – I knew too of the existence of some so-called sects of Mennonites, Herrnhuters, and Quakers, who do not allow a Christian the use of weapons, and do not enter military service; but I knew little of what had been done by these so-called sects toward expounding the question.

My book was, as I had anticipated, suppressed by the Russian censorship; but partly owing to my literary reputation, partly because the book had excited people's curiosity, it circulated in manuscript and in lithographed copies in Russia and through translations abroad, and it evoked, on one side, from those who shared my convictions, a series of essays with a great deal of information on the subject, on the other side a series of criticisms on the principles laid down in my book.

A great deal was made clear to me by both hostile and sympathetic criticism, and also by the historical events of late years; and I was led to fresh results and conclusions, which I wish now to expound.

First I will speak of the information I received on the history of the question of non-resistance to evil; then of the views of this question maintained by spiritual critics, that is, by professed believers in the Christian religion, and also by temporal ones, that is, those who do not profess the Christian religion; and lastly I will speak of the conclusions to which I have been brought by all this in the light of the historical events of late years.

L. Tolstoy.

Yasnaïa Poliana,
May 14/26, 1893.

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL BY FORCE HAS BEEN PROFESSED BY A MINORITY OF MEN FROM THE VERY FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Of the Book "What I Believe" – The Correspondence Evoked by it – Letters from Quakers – Garrison's Declaration – Adin Ballou, his Works, his Catechism – Helchitsky's "Net of Faith" – The Attitude of the World to Works Elucidating Christ's Teaching – Dymond's Book "On War" – Musser's "Non-resistance Asserted" – Attitude of the Government in 1818 to Men who Refused to Serve in the Army – Hostile Attitude of Governments Generally and of Liberals to Those who Refuse to Assist in Acts of State Violence, and their Conscious Efforts to Silence and Suppress these Manifestations of Christian Non-resistance.

Among the first responses called forth by my book were some letters from American Quakers. In these letters, expressing their sympathy with my views on the unlawfulness for a Christian of war and the use of force of any kind, the Quakers gave me details of their own so-called sect, which for more than two hundred years has actually professed the teaching of Christ on non-resistance to evil by force, and does not make use of weapons in self-defense. The Quakers sent me also their pamphlets, journals, and books, from which I learnt how they had, years ago, established beyond doubt the duty for a Christian of fulfilling the command of non-resistance to evil by force, and had exposed the error of the Church's teaching in allowing war and capital punishment.

In a whole series of arguments and texts showing that war – that is, the wounding and killing of men – is inconsistent with a religion founded on peace and good will toward men, the Quakers maintain and prove that nothing has contributed so much to the obscuring of Christian truth in the eyes of the heathen, and has hindered so much the diffusion of Christianity through the world, as the disregard of this command by men calling themselves Christians, and the permission of war and violence to Christians.

"Christ's teaching, which came to be known to men, not by means of violence and the sword," they say, "but by means of non-resistance to evil, gentleness, meekness, and peaceableness, can only be diffused through the world by the example of peace, harmony, and love among its followers."

"A Christian, according to the teaching of God himself, can act only peaceably toward all men, and therefore there can be no authority able to force the Christian to act in opposition to the teaching of God and to the principal virtue of the Christian in his relation with his neighbors."

"The law of state necessity," they say, "can force only those to change the law of God who, for the sake of earthly gains, try to reconcile the irreconcilable; but for a Christian who sincerely believes that following Christ's teaching will give him salvation, such considerations of state can have no force."

Further acquaintance with the labors of the Quakers and their works – with Fox, Penn, and especially the work of Dymond (published in 1827) – showed me not only that the impossibility of reconciling Christianity with force and war had been recognized long, long ago, but that this irreconcilability had been long ago proved so clearly and so indubitably that one could only wonder how this impossible reconciliation of Christian teaching with the use of force, which has been, and is still, preached in the churches, could have been maintained in spite of it.

In addition to what I learned from the Quakers I received about the same time, also from America, some information on the subject from a source perfectly distinct and previously unknown to me.

The son of William Lloyd Garrison, the famous champion of the emancipation of the negroes, wrote to me that he had read my book, in which he found ideas similar to those expressed by his father in the year 1838, and that, thinking it would be interesting to me to know this, he sent me a declaration or proclamation of "non-resistance" drawn up by his father nearly fifty years ago.

This declaration came about under the following circumstances: William Lloyd Garrison took part in a discussion on the means of suppressing war in the Society for the Establishment of Peace among Men, which existed in 1838 in America. He came to the conclusion that the establishment of universal peace can only be founded on the open profession of the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by violence (Matt. v. 39), in its full significance, as understood by the Quakers, with whom Garrison happened to be on friendly relations. Having come to this conclusion, Garrison thereupon composed and laid before the society a declaration, which was signed at the time – in 1838 – by many members.

"DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS ADOPTED BY THE PEACE CONVENTION

"Boston, 1838.

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

"We do not 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 and rights of American citizens are not dearer to us than those of the whole human race. Hence we can allow no appeal to patriotism to revenge any national insult or injury...

"We conceive that a nation has no right to defend itself against foreign enemies or to punish its invaders, and no individual possesses that right in his own case, and the unit cannot be of greater importance than the aggregate. If soldiers thronging from abroad with intent to commit rapine and destroy life may not be resisted by the people or the 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 no less absurd than impious. It makes the impartial Author of our existence 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 regard as unchristian and unlawful not only all wars, whether offensive or defensive, but all preparations for war; every naval ship, every arsenal, every fortification, we regard as unchristian and unlawful; the existence of any kind of standing army, all military chieftains, all monuments commemorative of victory

over a fallen foe, all trophies won in battle, all celebrations in honor of military exploits, all appropriations for defense by arms; we regard as unchristian and unlawful every edict of government requiring of its subjects military service.

"Hence we deem it unlawful to bear arms, and we cannot hold any office which imposes on its incumbent the obligation to compel men 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 honors, 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 force him to return anything he may have wrongly taken from us; if he has seized our coat, we shall surrender him our cloak also 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 on all his disciples in all cases whatsoever. To extort money from enemies, cast them into prison, exile or execute them, 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, and that the sinful dispositions of men can be subdued only by love; that evil can be exterminated only by good; that it is not safe to rely upon the strength of an arm to preserve us from harm; that there is great security in being gentle, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy; that it is only the meek who shall inherit the earth; for those who take up the sword shall perish by 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, is armed with omnipotent power, and must ultimately triumph over every assailing force.

"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 fundamental principle of not opposing evil by evil we cannot participate in sedition, treason, or violence. We shall submit to every ordinance and every requirement of government, except such as are contrary to the commands of the Gospel, and in no case resist the operation of law, except by meekly submitting to the penalty of disobedience.

"But while we shall adhere to the doctrine of non-resistance and passive submission to enemies, we purpose, in a moral and spiritual sense, to assail iniquity in high places and in low places, to apply our principles to all existing evil, political, legal, and ecclesiastical institutions, and to hasten the time when the kingdoms of this world will have become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. It appears to us a self-evident truth that whatever the Gospel is designed to destroy at 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 plowshares 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 stated our principles, 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. We shall endeavor to promulgate our views among all persons, to whatever nation, sect, or grade of society they may belong. Hence we shall organize public lectures, circulate tracts and publications, form societies, and petition every governing body. 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, and calumny. Tumults may arise against us. The proud and pharisaical, the ambitious and tyrannical, principalities and powers, 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. Our confidence is in the Lord Almighty and 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 trial which is to try us, but rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings.

"Wherefore we commit the keeping of our souls to God. 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 a 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, we hereby affix our signatures to it; commending it to the reason and conscience of mankind, and resolving, in the strength of the Lord God, to calmly and meekly abide the issue."

Immediately after this declaration a Society for Non-resistance was founded by Garrison, and a journal called the *Non-resistant*, in which the doctrine of non-resistance was advocated in its full significance and in all its consequences, as it had been expounded in the declaration. Further information as to the ultimate destiny of the society and the journal I gained from the excellent biography of W. L. Garrison, the work of his son.

The society and the journal did not exist for long. The greater number of Garrison's fellow-workers in the movement for the liberation of the slaves, fearing that the too radical programme of the journal, the *Non-resistant*, might keep people away from the practical work of negro-emancipation, gave up the profession of the principle of non-resistance as it had been expressed in the declaration, and both society and journal ceased to exist.

This declaration of Garrison's gave so powerful and eloquent an expression of a confession of faith of such importance to men, that one would have thought it must have produced a strong impression on people, and have become known throughout the world and the subject of discussion on every side. But nothing of the kind occurred. Not only was it unknown in Europe, even the Americans, who have such a high opinion of Garrison, hardly knew of the declaration.

Another champion of non-resistance has been overlooked in the same way – the American Adin Ballou, who lately died, after spending fifty years in preaching this doctrine. How great the ignorance is of everything relating to the question of non-resistance may be seen from the fact that Garrison the son, who has written an excellent biography of his father in four great volumes, in answer to my inquiry whether there are existing now societies for non-resistance, and adherents

of the doctrine, told me that as far as he knew that society had broken up, and that there were no adherents of that doctrine, while at the very time when he was writing to me there was living, at Hopedale in Massachusetts, Adin Ballou, who had taken part in the labors of Garrison the father, and had devoted fifty years of his life to advocating, both orally and in print, the doctrine of non-resistance. Later on I received a letter from Wilson, a pupil and colleague of Ballou's, and entered into correspondence with Ballou himself. I wrote to Ballou, and he answered me and sent me his works. Here is the summary of some extracts from them:

"Jesus Christ is my Lord and teacher," says Ballou in one of his essays exposing the inconsistency of Christians who allowed a right of self-defense and of warfare. "I have promised, leaving all else, to follow him, through good and through evil, to death itself. But I am a citizen of the democratic republic of the United States; and in allegiance to it I have sworn to defend the Constitution of my country, if need be, with my life. Christ requires of me to do unto others as I would they should do unto me. The Constitution of the United States requires of me to do unto two millions of slaves [at that time there were slaves; now one might venture to substitute the word 'laborers'] the very opposite of what I would they should do unto me – that is, to help to keep them in their present condition of slavery. And, in spite of this, I continue to elect or be elected, I propose to vote, I am even ready to be appointed to any office under government. That will not hinder me from being a Christian. I shall still profess Christianity, and shall find no difficulty in carrying out my covenant with Christ and with the government.

"Jesus Christ forbids me to resist evil doers, and to take from them an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, bloodshed for bloodshed, and life for life.

"My government demands from me quite the opposite, and bases a system of self-defense on gallows, musket, and sword, to be used against its foreign and domestic foes. And the land is filled accordingly with gibbets, prisons, arsenals, ships of war, and soldiers.

"In the maintenance and use of these expensive appliances for murder, we can very suitably exercise to the full the virtues of forgiveness to those who injure us, love toward our enemies, blessings to those who curse us, and doing good to those who hate us.

"For this we have a succession of Christian priests to pray for us and beseech the blessing of Heaven on the holy work of slaughter.

"I see all this (*i. e.*, the contradiction between profession and practice), and I continue to profess religion and take part in government, and pride myself on being at the same time a devout Christian and a devoted servant of the government. I do not want to agree with these senseless notions of non-resistance. I cannot renounce my authority and leave only immoral men in control of the government. The Constitution says the government has the right to declare war, and I assent to this and support it, and swear that I will support it. And I do not for that cease to be a Christian. War, too, is a Christian duty. Is it not a Christian duty to kill hundreds of thousands of one's fellow-men, to outrage women, to raze and burn towns, and to practice every possible cruelty? It is time to dismiss all these false sentimentalities. It is the truest means of forgiving injuries and loving enemies. If we only do it in the spirit of love, nothing can be more Christian than such murder."

In another pamphlet, entitled "How many Men are Necessary to Change a Crime into a Virtue?" he says: "One man may not kill. If he kills a fellow-creature, he is a murderer. If two, ten, a hundred men do so, they, too, are murderers. But a government or a nation may kill as many men as it chooses, and that will not be murder, but a great and noble action. Only gather the people together on a large scale, and a battle of ten thousand men becomes an innocent action. But precisely how many people must there be to make it so? – that is the question. One man cannot plunder and pillage, but a whole nation can. But precisely how many are needed to make it permissible? Why is it that one man, ten, a hundred, may not break the law of God, but a great number may?"

And here is a version of Ballou's catechism composed for his flock:

CATECHISM OF NON-RESISTANCE

Q. Whence is the word "non-resistance" derived?

A. From the command, "Resist not evil." (M. v. 39.)

Q. What does this word express?

A. It expresses a lofty Christian virtue enjoined on us by Christ.

Q. Ought the word "non-resistance" to be taken in its widest sense – that is to say, as intending that we should not offer any resistance of any kind to evil?

A. No; it ought to be taken in the exact sense of our Saviour's teaching – that is, not repaying evil for evil. We ought to oppose evil by every righteous means in our power, but not by evil.

Q. What is there to show that Christ enjoined non-resistance in that sense?

A. It is shown by the words he uttered at the same time. He said: "Ye have heard, it was said of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you Resist not evil. But if one smites thee on the right cheek, turn him the other also; and if one will go to law with thee to take thy coat from thee, give him thy cloak also."

Q. Of whom was he speaking in the words, "Ye have heard it was said of old"?

A. Of the patriarchs and the prophets, contained in the Old Testament, which the Hebrews ordinarily call the Law and the Prophets.

Q. What utterances did Christ refer to in the words, "It was said of old"?

A. The utterances of Noah, Moses, and the other prophets, in which they admit the right of doing bodily harm to those who inflict harm, so as to punish and prevent evil deeds.

Q. Quote such utterances.

A. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." – 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 and 23-25.

"He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor, as he hath done, so shall it be done unto him: breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." – Lev. xxiv. 17, 19, 20.

"Then 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, 21.

Noah, Moses, and the Prophets taught that he who kills, maims, or injures his neighbors does evil. To resist such evil, and to prevent it, the evil doer must be punished with death, or maiming, or some physical injury. Wrong must be opposed by wrong, murder by murder, injury by injury, evil by evil. Thus taught Noah, Moses, and the Prophets. But Christ rejects all this. "I say unto you," is written in the Gospel, "resist not evil," do not oppose injury with injury, but rather bear repeated injury from the evil doer. What was permitted is forbidden. When we understand what kind of resistance they taught, we know exactly what resistance Christ forbade.

Q. Then the ancients allowed the resistance of injury by injury?

A. Yes. But Jesus forbids it. The Christian has in no case the right to put to death his neighbor who has done him evil, or to do him injury in return.

Q. May he kill or maim him in self-defense?

A. No.

Q. May he go with a complaint to the judge that he who has wronged him may be punished?

A. No. What he does through others, he is in reality doing himself.

Q. Can he fight in conflict with foreign enemies or disturbers of the peace?

A. Certainly not. He cannot take any part in war or in preparations for war. He cannot make use of a deadly weapon. He cannot oppose injury to injury, whether he is alone or with others, either in person or through other people.

Q. Can he voluntarily vote or furnish soldiers for the government?

A. He can do nothing of that kind if he wishes to be faithful to Christ's law.

Q. Can he voluntarily give money to aid a government resting on military force, capital punishment, and violence in general?

A. No, unless the money is destined for some special object, right in itself, and good both in aim and means.

Q. Can he pay taxes to such a government?

A. No; he ought not voluntarily to pay taxes, but he ought not to resist the collecting of taxes. A tax is levied by the government, and is exacted independently of the will of the subject. It is impossible to resist it without having recourse to violence of some kind. Since the Christian cannot employ violence, he is obliged to offer his property at once to the loss by violence inflicted on it by the authorities.

Q. Can a Christian give a vote at elections, or take part in government or law business?

A. No; participation in election, government, or law business is participation in government by force.

Q. Wherein lies the chief significance of the doctrine of non-resistance?

A. In the fact that it alone allows of the possibility of eradicating evil from one's own heart, and also from one's neighbor's. This doctrine forbids doing that whereby evil has endured for ages and multiplied in the world. He who attacks another and injures him, kindles in the other a feeling of hatred, the root of every evil. To injure another because he has injured us, even with the aim of overcoming evil, is doubling the harm for him and for oneself; it is begetting, or at least setting free and inciting, that evil spirit which we should wish to drive out. Satan can never be driven out by Satan. Error can never be corrected by error, and evil cannot be vanquished by evil.

True non-resistance is the only real resistance to evil. It is crushing the serpent's head. It destroys and in the end extirpates the evil feeling.

Q. But if that is the true meaning of the rule of non-resistance, can it always be put into practice?

A. It can be put into practice like every virtue enjoined by the law of God. A virtue cannot be practiced in all circumstances without self-sacrifice, privation, suffering, and in extreme cases loss of life itself. But he who esteems life more than fulfilling the will of God is already dead to the only true life. Trying to save his life he loses it. Besides, generally speaking, where non-resistance costs the sacrifice of a single life or of some material welfare, resistance costs a thousand such sacrifices.

Non-resistance is Salvation; Resistance is Ruin.

It is incomparably less dangerous to act justly than unjustly, to submit to injuries than to resist them with violence, less dangerous even in one's relations to the present life. If all men refused to resist evil by evil our world would be happy.

Q. But so long as only a few act thus, what will happen to them?

A. If only one man acted thus, and all the rest agreed to crucify him, would it not be nobler for him to die in the glory of non-resisting love, praying for his enemies, than to live to wear the crown of Cæsar stained with the blood of the slain? However, one man, or a thousand men, firmly resolved not to oppose evil by evil are far more free from danger by violence than those who resort to violence, whether among civilized or savage neighbors. The robber, the murderer, and the cheat will leave them in peace, sooner than those who oppose them with arms, and those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword, but those who seek after peace, and behave kindly and harmlessly, forgiving and forgetting injuries, for the most part enjoy peace, or, if they die, they die blessed. In this way, if all kept the ordinance of non-resistance, there would obviously be

no evil nor crime. If the majority acted thus they would establish the rule of love and good will even over evil doers, never opposing evil with evil, and never resorting to force. If there were a moderately large minority of such men, they would exercise such a salutary moral influence on society that every cruel punishment would be abolished, and violence and feud would be replaced by peace and love. Even if there were only a small minority of them, they would rarely experience anything worse than the world's contempt, and meantime the world, though unconscious of it, and not grateful for it, would be continually becoming wiser and better for their unseen action on it. And if in the worst case some members of the minority were persecuted to death, in dying for the truth they would have left behind them their doctrine, sanctified by the blood of their martyrdom. Peace, then, to all who seek peace, and may overruling love be the imperishable heritage of every soul who obeys willingly Christ's word, "Resist not evil."

Adin Ballou.

For fifty years Ballou wrote and published books dealing principally with the question of non-resistance to evil by force. In these works, which are distinguished by the clearness of their thought and eloquence of exposition, the question is looked at from every possible side, and the binding nature of this command on every Christian who acknowledges the Bible as the revelation of God is firmly established. All the ordinary objections to the doctrine of non-resistance from the Old and New Testaments are brought forward, such as the expulsion of the money-changers from the Temple, and so on, and arguments follow in disproof of them all. The practical reasonableness of this rule of conduct is shown independently of Scripture, and all the objections ordinarily made against its practicability are stated and refuted. Thus one chapter in a book of his treats of non-resistance in exceptional cases, and he owns in this connection that if there were cases in which the rule of non-resistance were impossible of application, it would prove that the law was not universally authoritative. Quoting these cases, he shows that it is precisely in them that the application of the rule is both necessary and reasonable. There is no aspect of the question, either on his side or on his opponents', which he has not followed up in his writings. I mention all this to show the unmistakable interest which such works ought to have for men who make a profession of Christianity, and because one would have thought Ballou's work would have been well known, and the ideas expressed by him would have been either accepted or refuted; but such has not been the case.

The work of Garrison, the father, in his foundation of the Society of Non-resistants and his Declaration, even more than my correspondence with the Quakers, convinced me of the fact that the departure of the ruling form of Christianity from the law of Christ on non-resistance by force is an error that has long been observed and pointed out, and that men have labored, and are still laboring, to correct. Ballou's work confirmed me still more in this view. But the fate of Garrison, still more that of Ballou, in being completely unrecognized in spite of fifty years of obstinate and persistent work in the same direction, confirmed me in the idea that there exists a kind of tacit but steadfast conspiracy of silence about all such efforts.

Ballou died in August, 1890, and there was an obituary notice of him in an American journal of Christian views (*Religio-philosophical Journal*, August 23). In this laudatory notice it is recorded that Ballou was the spiritual director of a parish, that he delivered from eight to nine thousand sermons, married one thousand couples, and wrote about five hundred articles; but there is not a single word said of the object to which he devoted his life; even the word "non-resistance" is not mentioned. Precisely as it was with all the preaching of the Quakers for two hundred years, and, too, with the efforts of Garrison the father, the foundation of his society and journal, and his Declaration, so it is with the life-work of Ballou. It seems just as though it did not exist and never had existed.

We have an astounding example of the obscurity of works which aim at expounding the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force, and at confuting those who do not recognize this commandment, in the book of the Tsech Helchitsky, which has only lately been noticed and has not hitherto been printed.

Soon after the appearance of my book in German, I received a letter from Prague, from a professor of the university there, informing me of the existence of a work, never yet printed, by Helchitsky, a Tsech of the fifteenth century, entitled "The Net of Faith." In this work, the professor told me, Helchitsky expressed precisely the same view as to true and false Christianity as I had expressed in my book "What I Believe." The professor wrote to me that Helchitsky's work was to be published for the first time in the Tsech language in the *Journal of The Petersburg Academy of Science*. Since I could not obtain the book itself, I tried to make myself acquainted with what was known of Helchitsky, and I gained the following information from a German book sent me by the Prague professor and from Pypin's history of Tsech literature. This was Pypin's account:

"'The Net of Faith' is Christ's teaching, which ought to draw man up out of the dark depths of the sea of worldliness and his own iniquity. True faith consists in believing God's Word; but now a time has come when men mistake the true faith for heresy, and therefore it is for the reason to point out what the true faith consists in, if anyone does not know this. It is hidden in darkness from men, and they do not recognize the true law of Christ.

"To make this law plain, Helchitsky points to the primitive organization of Christian society – the organization which, he says, is now regarded in the Roman Church as an abominable heresy. This primitive Church was his special ideal of social organization, founded on equality, liberty, and fraternity. Christianity, in Helchitsky's view, still preserves these elements, and it is only necessary for society to return to its pure doctrine to render unnecessary every other form of social order in which kings and popes are essential; the law of love would alone be sufficient in every case.

"Historically, Helchitsky attributes the degeneration of Christianity to the times of Constantine the Great, whom the Pope Sylvester admitted into the Christian Church with all his heathen morals and life. Constantine, in his turn, endowed the Pope with worldly riches and power. From that time forward these two ruling powers were constantly aiding one another to strive for nothing but outward glory. Divines and ecclesiastical dignitaries began to concern themselves only about subduing the whole world to their authority, incited men against one another to murder and plunder, and in creed and life reduced Christianity to a nullity. Helchitsky denies completely the right to make war and to inflict the punishment of death; every soldier, even the 'knight,' is only a violent evil doer – a murderer."

The same account is given by the German book, with the addition of a few biographical details and some extracts from Helchitsky's writings.

Having learnt the drift of Helchitsky's teaching in this way, I awaited all the more impatiently the appearance of "The Net of Faith" in the journal of the Academy. But one year passed, then two and three, and still the book did not appear. It was only in 1888 that I learned that the printing of the book, which had been begun, was stopped. I obtained the proofs of what had been printed and read them through. It is a marvelous book from every point of view.

Its general tenor is given with perfect accuracy by Pypin. Helchitsky's fundamental idea is that Christianity, by allying itself with temporal power in the days of Constantine, and by continuing to develop in such conditions, has become completely distorted, and has ceased to be Christian altogether. Helchitsky gave the title "The Net of Faith" to his book, taking as his motto the verse of the Gospel about the calling of the disciples to be fishers of men; and, developing this metaphor, he says: "Christ, by means of his disciples, would have caught all the world in his net of faith, but the greater fishes broke the net and escaped out of it, and all the rest have slipped through the holes made by the greater fishes, so that the net has remained quite empty. The greater fishes who broke the net are the rulers, emperors, popes, kings, who have not renounced power, and instead

of true Christianity have put on what is simply a mask of it." Helchitsky teaches precisely what has been and is taught in these days by the non-resistant Mennonites and Quakers, and in former times by the Bogomilites, Paulicians, and many others. He teaches that Christianity, expecting from its adherents gentleness, meekness, peaceableness, forgiveness of injuries, turning the other cheek when one is struck, and love for enemies, is inconsistent with the use of force, which is an indispensable condition of authority.

The Christian, according to Helchitsky's reasoning, not only cannot be a ruler or a soldier; he cannot take any part in government nor in trade, or even be a landowner; he can only be an artisan or a husbandman.

This book is one of the few works attacking official Christianity which has escaped being burned. All such so-called heretical works were burned at the stake, together with their authors, so that there are few ancient works exposing the errors of official Christianity. The book has a special interest for this reason alone. But apart from its interest from every point of view, it is one of the most remarkable products of thought for its depth of aim, for the astounding strength and beauty of the national language in which it is written, and for its antiquity. And yet for more than four centuries it has remained unprinted, and is still unknown, except to a few learned specialists.

One would have thought that all such works, whether of the Quakers, of Garrison, of Ballou, or of Helchitsky, asserting and proving as they do, on the principles of the Gospel, that our modern world takes a false view of Christ's teaching, would have awakened interest, excitement, talk, and discussion among spiritual teachers and their flocks alike.

Works of this kind, dealing with the very essence of Christian doctrine, ought, one would have thought, to have been examined and accepted as true, or refuted and rejected. But nothing of the kind has occurred, and the same fate has been repeated with all those works. Men of the most diverse views, believers, and, what is surprising, unbelieving liberals also, as though by agreement, all preserve the same persistent silence about them, and all that has been done by people to explain the true meaning of Christ's doctrine remains either ignored or forgotten.

But it is still more astonishing that two other books, of which I heard on the appearance of my book, should be so little known. I mean 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. It is particularly astonishing that these books should be unknown, because, apart from their intrinsic merits, both books treat not so much of the theory as of the practical application of the theory to life, of the attitude of Christianity to military service, which is especially important and interesting now in these days of universal conscription.

People will ask, perhaps: How ought a subject to behave who believes that war is inconsistent with his religion while the government demands from him that he should enter military service?

This question is, I think, a most vital one, and the answer to it is specially important in these days of universal conscription. All – or at least the great majority of the people – are Christians, and all men are called upon for military service. How ought a man, as a Christian, to meet this demand? This is the gist of Dymond's answer:

"His duty is humbly but steadfastly to refuse to serve."

There are some people, who, without any definite reasoning about it, conclude straightway that the responsibility of government measures rests entirely on those who resolve on them, or that the governments and sovereigns decide the question of what is good or bad for their subjects, and the duty of the subjects is merely to obey. I think that arguments of this kind only obscure men's conscience. I cannot take part in the councils of government, and therefore I am not responsible for its misdeeds. Indeed, but we are responsible for our own misdeeds. And the misdeeds of our rulers become our own, if we, knowing that they are misdeeds, assist in carrying them out. Those who suppose that they are bound to obey the government, and that the responsibility for the misdeeds they commit is transferred from them to their rulers, deceive themselves. They say: "We give our

acts up to the will of others, and our acts cannot be good or bad; there is no merit in what is good nor responsibility for what is evil in our actions, since they are not done of our own will."

It is remarkable that the very same thing is said in the instructions to soldiers which they make them learn – that is, that the officer is alone responsible for the consequences of his command. But this is not right. A man cannot get rid of the responsibility for his own actions. And that is clear from the following example. If your officer commands you to kill your neighbor's child, to kill your father or your mother, would you obey? If you would not obey, the whole argument falls to the ground, for if you can disobey the governors in one case, where do you draw the line up to which you can obey them? There is no line other than that laid down by Christianity, and that line is both reasonable and practicable.

And therefore we consider it the duty of every man who thinks war inconsistent with Christianity, meekly but firmly to refuse to serve in the army. And let those whose lot it is to act thus, remember that the fulfillment of a great duty rests with them. The destiny of humanity in the world depends, so far as it depends on men at all, on their fidelity to their religion. Let them confess their conviction, and stand up for it, and not in words alone, but in sufferings too, if need be. If you believe that Christ forbade murder, pay no heed to the arguments nor to the commands of those who call on you to bear a hand in it. By such a steadfast refusal to make use of force, you call down on yourselves the blessing promised to those "who hear these sayings and do them," and the time will come when the world will recognize you as having aided in the reformation of mankind.

Musser's book is called "Non-resistance Asserted," or "Kingdom of Christ and Kingdoms of this World Separated." This book is devoted to the same question, and was written when the American Government was exacting military service from its citizens at the time of the Civil War. And it has, too, a value for all time, dealing with the question how, in such circumstances, people should and can refuse to enter military service. Here is the tenor of the author's introductory remarks: "It is well known that there are many persons in the United States who refuse to fight on grounds of conscience. They are called the 'defenseless,' or 'non-resistant' Christians. These Christians refuse to defend their country, to bear arms, or at the call of government to make war on its enemies. Till lately this religious scruple seemed a valid excuse to the government, and those who urged it were let off service. But at the beginning of our Civil War public opinion was agitated on this subject. It was natural that persons who considered it their duty to bear all the hardships and dangers of war in defense of their country should feel resentment against those persons who had for long shared with them the advantages of the protection of the government, and who now in time of need and danger would not share in bearing the labors and dangers of its defense. It was even natural that they should declare the attitude of such men monstrous, irrational, and suspicious."

A host of orators and writers, our author tells us, arose to oppose this attitude, and tried to prove the sinfulness of non-resistance, both from Scripture and on common-sense grounds. And this was perfectly natural, and in many cases the authors were right – right, that is, in regard to persons who did not renounce the benefits they received from the government and tried to avoid the hardships of military service, but not right in regard to the principle of non-resistance itself. Above all, our author proves the binding nature of the rule of non-resistance for a Christian, pointing out that this command is perfectly clear, and is enjoined upon every Christian by Christ without possibility of misinterpretation. "Bethink yourselves whether it is righteous to obey man more than God," said Peter and John. And this is precisely what ought to be the attitude of every man who wishes to be Christian to the claim on him for military service, when Christ has said, "Resist not evil by force." As for the question of the principle itself, the author regards that as decided. As to the second question, whether people have the right to refuse to serve in the army who have not refused the benefits conferred by a government resting on force, the author considers it in detail, and arrives at the conclusion that a Christian following the law of Christ, since he does not go to war, ought not either to take advantage of any of the institutions of government, courts of law, or

elections, and that in his private concerns he must not have recourse to the authorities, the police, or the law. Further on in the book he treats of the relation of the Old Testament to the New, the value of government for those who are Christians, and makes some observations on the doctrine of non-resistance and the attacks made on it. The author concludes his book by saying: "Christians do not need government, and therefore they cannot either obey it in what is contrary to Christ's teaching nor, still less, take part in it." Christ took his disciples out of the world, he says. They do not expect worldly blessings and worldly happiness, but they expect eternal life. The Spirit in whom they live makes them contented and happy in every position. If the world tolerates them, they are always happy. If the world will not leave them in peace, they will go elsewhere, since they are pilgrims on the earth and they have no fixed place of habitation. They believe that "the dead may bury their dead." One thing only is needful for them, "to follow their Master."

Even putting aside the question as to the principle laid down in these two books as to the Christian's duty in his attitude to war, one cannot help perceiving the practical importance and the urgent need of deciding the question.

There are people, hundreds of thousands of Quakers, Mennonites, all our Douhoborts, Molokani, and others who do not belong to any definite sect, who consider that the use of force – and, consequently, military service – is inconsistent with Christianity. Consequently there are every year among us in Russia some men called upon for military service who refuse to serve on the ground of their religious convictions. Does the government let them off then? No. Does it compel them to go, and in case of disobedience punish them? No. This was how the government treated them in 1818. Here is an extract from the diary of Nicholas Myravyov of Kars, which was not passed by the censor, and is not known in Russia:

"Tiflis, October 2, 1818.

"In the morning the commandant told me that five peasants belonging to a landowner in the Tamboff government had lately been sent to Georgia. These men had been sent for soldiers, but they would not serve; they had been several times flogged and made to run the gauntlet, but they would submit readily to the cruelest tortures, and even to death, rather than serve. 'Let us go,' they said, 'and leave us alone; we will not hurt anyone; all men are equal, and the Tzar is a man like us; why should we pay him tribute; why should I expose my life to danger to kill in battle some man who has done me no harm? You can cut us to pieces and we will not be soldiers. He who has compassion on us will give us charity, but as for the government rations, we have not had them and we do not want to have them.' These were the words of those peasants, who declare that there are numbers like them in Russia. They brought them four times before the Committee of Ministers, and at last decided to lay the matter before the Tzar, who gave orders that they should be taken to Georgia for correction, and commanded the commander-in-chief to send him a report every month of their gradual success in bringing these peasants to a better mind."

How the correction ended is not known, as the whole episode indeed was unknown, having been kept in profound secrecy.

This was how the government behaved seventy-five years ago – this is how it has behaved in a great number of cases, studiously concealed from the people. And this is how the government behaves now, except in the case of the German Mennonites, living in the province of Kherson, whose plea against military service is considered well grounded. They are made to work off their term of service in labor in the forests.

But in the recent cases of refusal on the part of Mennonites to serve in the army on religious grounds, the government authorities have acted in the following manner:

To begin with, they have recourse to every means of coercion used in our times to "correct" the culprit and bring him to "a better mind," and these measures are carried out with the greatest secrecy. I know that in the case of one man who declined to serve in 1884 in Moscow, the official correspondence on the subject had two months after his refusal accumulated into a big folio, and was kept absolutely secret among the Ministry.

They usually begin by sending the culprit to the priests, and the latter, to their shame be it said, always exhort him to obedience. But since the exhortation in Christ's name to forswear Christ is for the most part unsuccessful, after he has received the admonitions of the spiritual authorities, they send him to the gendarmes, and the latter, finding, as a rule, no political cause for offense in him, dispatch him back again, and then he is sent to the learned men, to the doctors, and to the madhouse. During all these vicissitudes he is deprived of liberty and has to endure every kind of humiliation and suffering as a convicted criminal. (All this has been repeated in four cases.) The doctors let him out of the madhouse, and then every kind of secret shift is employed to prevent him from going free – whereby others would be encouraged to refuse to serve as he has done – and at the same time to avoid leaving him among the soldiers, for fear they too should learn from him that military service is not at all their duty by the law of God, as they are assured, but quite contrary to it.

The most convenient thing for the government would be to kill the non-resistant by flogging him to death or some other means, as was done in former days. But to put a man openly to death because he believes in the creed we all confess is impossible. To let a man alone who has refused obedience is also impossible. And so the government tries either to compel the man by ill-treatment to renounce Christ, or in some way or other to get rid of him unobserved, without openly putting him to death, and to hide somehow both the action and the man himself from other people. And so all kinds of shifts and wiles and cruelties are set on foot against him. They either send him to the frontier or provoke him to insubordination, and then try him for breach of discipline and shut him up in the prison of the disciplinary battalion, where they can ill treat him freely unseen by anyone, or they declare him mad, and lock him up in a lunatic asylum. They sent one man in this way to Tashkend – that is, they pretended to transfer him to the Tashkend army; another to Omsk; a third they convicted of insubordination and shut up in prison; a fourth they sent to a lunatic asylum.

Everywhere the same story is repeated. Not only the government, but the great majority of liberal, advanced people, as they are called, studiously turn away from everything that has been said, written, or done, or is being done by men to prove the incompatibility of force in its most awful, gross, and glaring form – in the form, that is, of an army of soldiers prepared to murder anyone, whoever it may be – with the teachings of Christianity, or even of the humanity which society professes as its creed.

So that the information I have gained of the attitude of the higher ruling classes, not only in Russia but in Europe and America, toward the elucidation of this question has convinced me that there exists in these ruling classes a consciously hostile attitude to true Christianity, which is shown pre-eminently in their reticence in regard to all manifestations of it.

CHAPTER II

CRITICISMS OF THE DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL BY FORCE ON THE PART OF BELIEVERS AND OF UNBELIEVERS

Fate of the Book "What I Believe" – Evasive Character of Religious Criticisms of Principles of my Book – 1st Reply: Use of Force not Opposed to Christianity – 2d Reply: Use of Force Necessary to Restrain Evil Doers – 3d Reply: Duty of Using Force in Defense of One's Neighbor – 4th Reply: The Breach of the Command of Non-resistance to be Regarded Simply as a Weakness – 5th Reply: Reply Evaded by Making Believe that the Question has long been Decided – To Devise such Subterfuges and to take Refuge Behind the Authority of the Church, of Antiquity, and of Religion is all that Ecclesiastical Critics can do to get out of the Contradiction between Use of Force and Christianity in Theory and in Practice – General Attitude of the Ecclesiastical World and of the Authorities to Profession of True Christianity – General Character of Russian Freethinking Critics – Foreign Freethinking Critics – Mistaken Arguments of these Critics the Result of Misunderstanding the True Meaning of Christ's Teaching.

The impression I gained of a desire to conceal, to hush up, what I had tried to express in my book, led me to judge the book itself afresh.

On its appearance it had, as I had anticipated, been forbidden, and ought therefore by law to have been burnt. But, at the same time, it was discussed among officials, and circulated in a great number of manuscript and lithograph copies, and in translations printed abroad.

And very quickly after the book, criticisms, both religious and secular in character, made their appearance, and these the government tolerated, and even encouraged. So that the refutation of a book which no one was supposed to know anything about was even chosen as the subject for theological dissertations in the academies.

The criticisms of my book, Russian and foreign alike, fall under two general divisions – the religious criticisms of men who regard themselves as believers, and secular criticisms, that is, those of freethinkers.

I will begin with the first class. In my book I made it an accusation against the teachers of the Church that their teaching is opposed to Christ's commands clearly and definitely expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, and opposed in especial to his command in regard to resistance to evil, and that in this way they deprive Christ's teaching of all value. The Church authorities accept the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount on non-resistance to evil by force as divine revelation; and therefore one would have thought that if they felt called upon to write about my book at all, they would have found it inevitable before everything else to reply to the principal point of my charge against them, and to say plainly, do they or do they not admit the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the commandment of non-resistance to evil as binding on a Christian. And they were bound to answer this question, not after the usual fashion (*i. e.*, "that although on the one side one cannot absolutely deny, yet on the other side one cannot again fully assent, all the more seeing that," etc., etc.). No; they should have answered the question as plainly as it was put in my book – Did Christ really demand from his disciples that they should carry out what he taught them in the Sermon on the Mount? And can a Christian, then, or can he not, always remaining a Christian, go to law or make any use of the law, or seek his own protection in the law? And can the Christian, or can he not, remaining a Christian, take part in the administration of government, using

compulsion against his neighbors? And – the most important question hanging over the heads of all of us in these days of universal military service – can the Christian, or can he not, remaining a Christian, against Christ's direct prohibition, promise obedience in future actions directly opposed to his teaching? And can he, by taking his share of service in the army, prepare himself to murder men, and even actually murder them?

These questions were put plainly and directly, and seemed to require a plain and direct answer; but in all the criticisms of my book there was no such plain and direct answer. No; my book received precisely the same treatment as all the attacks upon the teachers of the Church for their defection from the Law of Christ of which history from the days of Constantine is full.

A very great deal was said in connection with my book of my having incorrectly interpreted this and other passages of the Gospel, of my being in error in not recognizing the Trinity, the redemption, and the immortality of the soul. A very great deal was said, but not a word about the one thing which for every Christian is the most essential question in life – how to reconcile the duty of forgiveness, meekness, patience, and love for all, neighbors and enemies alike, which is so clearly expressed in the words of our teacher, and in the heart of each of us – how to reconcile this duty with the obligation of using force in war upon men of our own or a foreign people.

All that are worth calling answers to this question can be brought under the following five heads. I have tried to bring together in this connection all I could, not only from the criticisms on my book, but from what has been written in past times on this theme.

The first and crudest form of reply consists in the bold assertion that the use of force is not opposed by the teaching of Christ; that it is permitted, and even enjoined, on the Christian by the Old and New Testaments.

Assertions of this kind proceed, for the most part, from men who have attained the highest ranks in the governing or ecclesiastical hierarchy, and who are consequently perfectly assured that no one will dare to contradict their assertion, and that if anyone does contradict it they will hear nothing of the contradiction. These men have, for the most part, through the intoxication of power, so lost the right idea of what that Christianity is in the name of which they hold their position that what is Christian in Christianity presents itself to them as heresy, while everything in the Old and New Testaments which can be distorted into an antichristian and heathen meaning they regard as the foundation of Christianity. In support of their assertion that Christianity is not opposed to the use of force, these men usually, with the greatest audacity, bring together all the most obscure passages from the Old and New Testaments, interpreting them in the most unchristian way – the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, of Simon the Sorcerer, etc. They quote all those sayings of Christ's which can possibly be interpreted as justification of cruelty: the expulsion from the Temple; "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for this city," etc., etc. According to these people's notions, a Christian government is not in the least bound to be guided by the spirit of peace, forgiveness of injuries, and love for enemies.

To refute such an assertion is useless, because the very people who make this assertion refute themselves, or, rather, renounce Christ, inventing a Christianity and a Christ of their own in the place of him in whose name the Church itself exists, as well as their office in it. If all men were to learn that the Church professes to believe in a Christ of punishment and warfare, not of forgiveness, no one would believe in the Church and it could not prove to anyone what it is trying to prove.

The second, somewhat less gross, form of argument consists in declaring that, though Christ did indeed preach that we should turn the left cheek, and give the cloak also, and this is the highest moral duty, yet that there are wicked men in the world, and if these wicked men were not restrained by force, the whole world and all good men would come to ruin through them. This argument I found for the first time in John Chrysostom, and I show how he is mistaken in my book "What I Believe."

This argument is ill grounded, because if we allow ourselves to regard any men as intrinsically wicked men, then in the first place we annul, by so doing, the whole idea of the Christian teaching, according to which we are all equals and brothers, as sons of one Father in heaven. Secondly, it is ill founded, because even if to use force against wicked men had been permitted by God, since it is impossible to find a perfect and unfailing distinction by which one could positively know the wicked from the good, so it would come to all individual men and societies of men mutually regarding each other as wicked men, as is the case now. Thirdly, even if it were possible to distinguish the wicked from the good unfailingly, even then it would be impossible to kill or injure or shut up in prison these wicked men, because there would be no one in a Christian society to carry out such punishment, since every Christian, as a Christian, has been commanded to use no force against the wicked.

The third kind of answer, still more subtle than the preceding, consists in asserting that though the command of non-resistance to evil by force is binding on the Christian when the evil is directed against himself personally, it ceases to be binding when the evil is directed against his neighbors, and that then the Christian is not only not bound to fulfill the commandment, but is even bound to act in opposition to it in defense of his neighbors, and to use force against transgressors by force. This assertion is an absolute assumption, and one cannot find in all Christ's teaching any confirmation of such an argument. Such an argument is not only a limitation, but a direct contradiction and negation of the commandment. If every man has the right to have recourse to force in face of a danger threatening another, the question of the use of force is reduced to a question of the definition of danger for another. If my private judgment is to decide the question of what is danger for another, there is no occasion for the use of force which could not be justified on the ground of danger threatening some other man. They killed and burnt witches, they killed aristocrats and girondists, they killed their enemies, because those who were in authority regarded them as dangerous for the people.

If this important limitation, which fundamentally undermines the whole value of the commandment, had entered into Christ's meaning, there must have been mention of it somewhere. This restriction is made nowhere in our Saviour's life or preaching. On the contrary, warning is given precisely against this treacherous and scandalous restriction which nullifies the commandment. The error and impossibility of such a limitation is shown in the Gospel with special clearness in the account of the judgment of Caiaphas, who makes precisely this distinction. He acknowledged that it was wrong to punish the innocent Jesus, but he saw in him a source of danger not for himself, but for the whole people, and therefore he said: It is better for one man to die, that the whole people perish not. And the erroneousness of such a limitation is still more clearly expressed in the words spoken to Peter when he tried to resist by force evil directed against Jesus (Matt. xxvi. 52). Peter was not defending himself, but his beloved and heavenly Master. And Christ at once reproved him for this, saying, that he who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword.

Besides, apologies for violence used against one's neighbor in defense of another neighbor from greater violence are always untrustworthy, because when force is used against one who has not yet carried out his evil intent, I can never know which would be greater – the evil of my act of violence or of the act I want to prevent. We kill the criminal that society may be rid of him, and we never know whether the criminal of to-day would not have been a changed man to-morrow, and whether our punishment of him is not useless cruelty. We shut up the dangerous – as we think – member of society, but the next day this man might cease to be dangerous and his imprisonment might be for nothing. I see that a man I know to be a ruffian is pursuing a young girl. I have a gun in my hand – I kill the ruffian and save the girl. But the death or the wounding of the ruffian has positively taken place, while what would have happened if this had not been I cannot know. And what an immense mass of evil must result, and indeed does result, from allowing men to assume the right of anticipating what may happen. Ninety-nine per cent. of the evil of the world is founded

on this reasoning – from the Inquisition to dynamite bombs, and the executions or punishments of tens of thousands of political criminals.

A fourth, still more refined, reply to the question, What ought to be the Christian's attitude to Christ's command of non-resistance to evil by force? consists in declaring that they do not deny the command of non-resistance to evil, but recognize it; but they only do not ascribe to this command the special exclusive value attached to it by sectarians. To regard this command as the indispensable condition of Christian life, as Garrison, Ballou, Dymond, the Quakers, the Mennonites, and the Shakers do now, and as the Moravian brothers, the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Bogomilites, and the Paulicians did in the past, is a one-sided heresy. This command has neither more nor less value than all the other commands, and the man who through weakness transgresses any command whatever, the command of non-resistance included, does not cease to be a Christian if he hold the true faith. This is a very skillful device, and many people who wish to be deceived are easily deceived by it. The device consists in reducing a direct conscious denial of a command to a casual breach of it. But one need only compare the attitude of the teachers of the Church to this and to other commands which they really do recognize, to be convinced that their attitude to this is completely different from their attitude to other duties.

The command against fornication they do really recognize, and consequently they do not admit that in any case fornication can cease to be wrong. The Church preachers never point out cases in which the command against fornication can be broken, and always teach that we must avoid seductions which lead to temptation to fornication. But not so with the command of non-resistance. All church preachers recognize cases in which that command can be broken, and teach the people accordingly. And they not only do not teach that we should avoid temptations to break it, chief of which is the military oath, but they themselves administer it. The preachers of the Church never in any other case advocate the breaking of any other commandment. But in connection with the commandment of non-resistance they openly teach that we must not understand it too literally, but that there are conditions and circumstances in which we must do the direct opposite, that is, go to law, fight, punish. So that occasions for fulfilling the commandment of non-resistance to evil by force are taught for the most part as occasions for not fulfilling it. The fulfillment of this command, they say, is very difficult and pertains only to perfection. And how can it not be difficult, when the breach of it is not only not forbidden, but law courts, prisons, cannons, guns, armies, and wars are under the immediate sanction of the Church? It cannot be true, then, that this command is recognized by the preachers of the Church as on a level with other commands.

The preachers of the Church clearly do not recognize it; only not daring to acknowledge this, they try to conceal their not recognizing it.

So much for the fourth reply.

The fifth kind of answer, which is the subtlest, the most often used, and the most effective, consists in avoiding answering, in making believe that this question is one which has long ago been decided perfectly clearly and satisfactorily, and that it is not worth while to talk about it. This method of reply is employed by all the more or less cultivated religious writers, that is to say, those who feel the laws of Christ binding for themselves. Knowing that the contradiction existing between the teaching of Christ which we profess with our lips and the whole order of our lives cannot be removed by words, and that touching upon it can only make it more obvious, they, with more or less ingenuity, evade it, pretending that the question of reconciling Christianity with the use of force has been decided already, or does not exist at all.¹

¹ I only know one work which differs somewhat from this general definition, and that is not a criticism in the precise meaning of the word, but an article treating of the same subject and having my book in view. I mean the pamphlet of Mr. Troizky (published at Kazan), "A Sermon for the People." The author obviously accepts Christ's teaching in its true meaning. He says that the prohibition of resistance to evil by force means exactly what it does mean; and the same with the prohibition of swearing. He does not, as others do, deny the meaning of Christ's teaching, but unfortunately he does not draw from this admission the inevitable deductions

The majority of religious critics of my book use this fifth method of replying to it. I could quote dozens of such critics, in all of whom, without exception, we find the same thing repeated: everything is discussed except what constitutes the principal subject of the book. As a characteristic example of such criticisms, I will quote the article of a well-known and ingenious English writer and preacher – Farrar – who, like many learned theologians, is a great master of the art of circuitously evading a question. The article was published in an American journal, the *Forum*, in October, 1888.

After conscientiously explaining in brief the contents of my book, Farrar says: "Tolstoy came to the conclusion that a coarse deceit had been palmed upon the world when these words, 'Resist not evil,' 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 of Christ, viz.: 1. Live in peace with all men. 2. Be pure. 3. Take no oaths. 4. Resist not evil. 5. Renounce national distinctions.

"Tolstoy," he says, "rejects the inspiration of the Old Testament; hence he rejects the chief doctrines of the Church – that of the Atonement by blood, the Trinity, the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and his transmission through the priesthood." And he recognizes only the words and commands of Christ. "But is this interpretation of Christ a true one?" he says. "Are all men bound to act as Tolstoy teaches —*i. e.*, to carry out these five commandments of Christ?" You expect, then, that in answer to this essential question, which is the only one that could induce a man to write an article about the book, he will say either that this interpretation of Christ's teaching is true and we ought to follow it, or he will say that such an interpretation is untrue, will show why, and will give some other correct interpretation of those words which I interpret incorrectly. But nothing of the kind is done. Farrar only expresses his "belief" that, "though actuated by the noblest sincerity, Count Tolstoy has been misled by partial and one-sided interpretations of the meaning of the Gospel and the mind and will of Christ." What this error consists in is not made clear; it is only said: "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, in a tranquil spirit:

"Meanwhile, the reader who feels troubled lest it should be his duty also to forsake all the conditions of his life and to take up the position and work of a common laborer, 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 to disturb the bases and revolutionize the institutions of all human society, which themselves rest on divine sanctions as well as on inevitable conditions. Were it my object to prove how untenable is the doctrine of communism, based by Count Tolstoy upon the divine paradoxes [*sic*], which can be interpreted only on 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 pity he has not "an ampler canvas at his disposal"! And what a strange thing it is that for all these last fifteen centuries no one has had "a canvas ample enough" to prove that Christ, whom we profess to believe in, says something utterly unlike what he does say! Still, they could prove it if they wanted to. But it is not worth while to prove what everyone knows; it is enough to say, "*securus judicat orbis terrarum*."

And of this kind, without exception, are all the criticisms of educated believers, who must, as such, understand the danger of their position. The sole escape from it for them lies in their hope that they may be able, by using the authority of the Church, of antiquity, and of their sacred office, to

which present themselves spontaneously in our life when we understand Christ's teaching in that way. If we must not oppose evil by force, nor swear, everyone naturally asks, "How, then, about military service? and the oath of obedience?" To this question the author gives no reply; but it must be answered. And if he cannot answer, then he would do better not to speak on the subject at all, as such silence leads to error.

overawe the reader and draw him away from the idea of reading the Gospel for himself and thinking out the question in his own mind for himself. And in this they are successful; for, indeed, how could the notion occur to anyone that all that has been repeated from century to century with such earnestness and solemnity by all those archdeacons, bishops, archbishops, holy synods, and popes, is all of it a base lie and a calumny foisted upon Christ by them for the sake of keeping safe the money they must have to live luxuriously on the necks of other men? And it is a lie and a calumny so transparent that the only way of keeping it up consists in overawing people by their earnestness, their conscientiousness. It is just what has taken place of late years at recruiting sessions; at a table before the zertzal – the symbol of the Tzar's authority – in the seat of honor under the life-size portrait of the Tzar, sit dignified old officials, wearing decorations, conversing freely and easily, writing notes, summoning men before them, and giving orders. Here, wearing a cross on his breast, near them, is a prosperous-looking old priest in a silken cassock, with long gray hair flowing on to his cope, before a lectern who wears the golden cross and has a Gospel bound in gold.

They summon Ivan Petroff. A young man comes in, wretchedly, shabbily dressed, and in terror, the muscles of his face working, his eyes bright and restless; and in a broken voice, hardly above a whisper, he says: "I – by Christ's law – as a Christian – I cannot." "What is he muttering?" asks the president, frowning impatiently and raising his eyes from his book to listen. "Speak louder," the colonel with shining epaulets shouts to him. "I – I as a Christian – " And at last it appears that the young man refuses to serve in the army because he is a Christian. "Don't talk nonsense. Stand to be measured. Doctor, may I trouble you to measure him. He is all right?" "Yes." "Reverend father, administer the oath to him."

No one is the least disturbed by what the poor scared young man is muttering. They do not even pay attention to it. "They all mutter something, but we've no time to listen to it, we have to enroll so many."

The recruit tries to say something still. "It's opposed to the law of Christ." "Go along, go along; we know without your help what is opposed to the law and what's not; and you soothe his mind, reverend father, soothe him. Next: Vassily Nikitin." And they lead the trembling youth away. And it does not strike anyone – the guards, or Vassily Nikitin, whom they are bringing in, or any of the spectators of this scene – that these inarticulate words of the young man, at once suppressed by the authorities, contain the truth, and that the loud, solemnly uttered sentences of the calm, self-confident official and the priest are a lie and a deception.

Such is the impression produced not only by Farrar's article, but by all those solemn sermons, articles, and books which make their appearance from all sides directly there is anywhere a glimpse of truth exposing a predominant falsehood. At once begins the series of long, clever, ingenious, and solemn speeches and writings, which deal with questions nearly related to the subject, but skillfully avoid touching the subject itself.

That is the essence of the fifth and most effective means of getting out of the contradictions in which Church Christianity has placed itself, by professing its faith in Christ's teaching in words, while it denies it in its life, and teaches people to do the same.

Those who justify themselves by the first method, directly, crudely asserting that Christ sanctioned violence, wars, and murder, repudiate Christ's doctrine directly; those who find their defense in the second, the third, or the fourth method are confused and can easily be convicted of error; but this last class, who do not argue, who do not condescend to argue about it, but take shelter behind their own grandeur, and make a show of all this having been decided by them or at least by someone long ago, and no longer offering a possibility of doubt to anyone – they seem safe from attack, and will be beyond attack till men come to realize that they are under the narcotic influence exerted on them by governments and churches, and are no longer affected by it.

Such was the attitude of the spiritual critics —*i. e.*, those professing faith in Christ – to my book. And their attitude could not have been different. They are bound to take up this attitude by the

contradictory position in which they find themselves between belief in the divinity of their Master and disbelief in his clearest utterances, and they want to escape from this contradiction. So that one cannot expect from them free discussion of the very essence of the question – that is, of the change in men's life which must result from applying Christ's teaching to the existing order of the world. Such free discussion I only expected from worldly, freethinking critics who are not bound to Christ's teaching in any way, and can therefore take an independent view of it. I had anticipated that freethinking writers would look at Christ, not merely, like the Churchmen, as the founder of a religion of personal salvation, but, to express it in their language, as a reformer who laid down new principles of life and destroyed the old, and whose reforms are not yet complete, but are still in progress even now.

Such a view of Christ and his teaching follows from my book. But to my astonishment, out of the great number of critics of my book there was not one, either Russian or foreign, who treated the subject from the side from which it was approached in the book – that is, who criticised Christ's doctrines as philosophical, moral, and social principles, to use their scientific expressions. This was not done in a single criticism. The freethinking Russian critics taking my book as though its whole contents could be reduced to non-resistance to evil, and understanding the doctrine of non-resistance to evil itself (no doubt for greater convenience in refuting it) as though it would prohibit every kind of conflict with evil, fell vehemently upon this doctrine, and for some years past have been very successfully proving that Christ's teaching is mistaken in so far as it forbids resistance to evil. Their refutations of this hypothetical doctrine of Christ were all the more successful since they knew beforehand that their arguments could not be contested or corrected, for the censorship, not having passed the book, did not pass articles in its defense.

It is a remarkable thing that among us, where one cannot say a word about the Holy Scriptures without the prohibition of the censorship, for some years past there have been in all the journals constant attacks and criticisms on the command of Christ simply and directly stated in Matt. v. 39. The Russian advanced critics, obviously unaware of all that has been done to elucidate the question of non-resistance, and sometimes even imagining apparently that the rule of non-resistance to evil had been invented by me personally, fell foul of the very idea of it. They opposed it and attacked it, and advancing with great heat arguments which had long ago been analyzed and refuted from every point of view, they demonstrated that a man ought invariably to defend (with violence) all the injured and oppressed, and that thus the doctrine of non-resistance to evil is an immoral doctrine.

To all Russian critics the whole import of Christ's command seemed reducible to the fact that it would hinder them from the active opposition to evil to which they are accustomed. So that the principle of non-resistance to evil by force has been attacked by two opposing camps: the conservatives, because this principle would hinder their activity in resistance to evil as applied to the revolutionists, in persecution and punishment of them; the revolutionists, too, because this principle would hinder their resistance to evil as applied to the conservatives and the overthrowing of them. The conservatives were indignant at the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force hindering the energetic destruction of the revolutionary elements, which may ruin the national prosperity; the revolutionists were indignant at the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force hindering the overthrow of the conservatives, who are ruining the national prosperity. It is worthy of remark in this connection that the revolutionists have attacked the principle of non-resistance to evil by force, in spite of the fact that it is the greatest terror and danger for every despotism. For ever since the beginning of the world, the use of violence of every kind, from the Inquisition to the Schlüsselburg fortress, has rested and still rests on the opposite principle of the necessity of resisting evil by force.

Besides this, the Russian critics have pointed out the fact that the application of the command of non-resistance to practical life would turn mankind aside out of the path of civilization along which it is moving. The path of civilization on which mankind in Europe is moving is in their opinion the one along which all mankind ought always to move.

So much for the general character of the Russian critics.

Foreign critics started from the same premises, but their discussions of my book were somewhat different from those of Russian critics, not only in being less bitter, and in showing more culture, but even in the subject-matter.

In discussing my book and the Gospel teaching generally, as it is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, the foreign critics maintained that such doctrine is not peculiarly Christian (Christian doctrine is either Catholicism or Protestantism according to their views) – the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is only a string of very pretty impracticable dreams *du charmant docteur*, as Renan says, fit for the simple and half-savage inhabitants of Galilee who lived eighteen hundred years ago, and for the half-savage Russian peasants – Sutaev and Bondarev – and the Russian mystic Tolstoy, but not at all consistent with a high degree of European culture.

The foreign freethinking critics have tried in a delicate manner, without being offensive to me, to give the impression that my conviction that mankind could be guided by such a naïve doctrine as that of the Sermon on the Mount proceeds from two causes: that such a conviction is partly due to my want of knowledge, my ignorance of history, my ignorance of all the vain attempts to apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to life, which have been made in history and have led to nothing; and partly it is due to my failing to appreciate the full value of the lofty civilization to which mankind has attained at present, with its Krupp cannons, smokeless powder, colonization of Africa, Irish Coercion Bill, parliamentary government, journalism, strikes, and the Eiffel Tower.

So wrote de Vogüé and Leroy Beaulieu and Matthew Arnold; so wrote the American author Savage, and Ingersoll, the popular freethinking American preacher, and many others.

"Christ's teaching is no use, because it is inconsistent with our industrial age," says Ingersoll naïvely, expressing in this utterance, with perfect directness and simplicity, the exact notion of Christ's teaching held by persons of refinement and culture of our times. The teaching is no use for our industrial age, precisely as though the existence of this industrial age were a sacred fact which ought not to and could not be changed. It is just as though drunkards when advised how they could be brought to habits of sobriety should answer that the advice is incompatible with their habit of taking alcohol.

The arguments of all the freethinking critics, Russian and foreign alike, different as they may be in tone and manner of presentation, all amount essentially to the same strange misapprehension – namely, that Christ's teaching, one of the consequences of which is non-resistance to evil, is of no use to us because it requires a change of our life.

Christ's teaching is useless because, if it were carried into practice, life could not go on as at present; we must add: if we have begun by living sinfully, as we do live and are accustomed to live. Not only is the question of non-resistance to evil not discussed; the very mention of the fact that the duty of non-resistance enters into Christ's teaching is regarded as satisfactory proof of the impracticability of the whole teaching.

Meanwhile one would have thought it was necessary to point out at least some kind of solution of the following question, since it is at the root of almost everything that interests us.

The question amounts to this: In what way are we to decide men's disputes, when some men consider evil what others consider good, and *vice versa*? And to reply that that is evil which I think evil, in spite of the fact that my opponent thinks it good, is not a solution of the difficulty. There can only be two solutions: either to find a real unquestionable criterion of what is evil or not to resist evil by force.

The first course has been tried ever since the beginning of historical times, and, as we all know, it has not hitherto led to any successful results.

The second solution – not forcibly to resist what we consider evil until we have found a universal criterion – that is the solution given by Christ.

We may consider the answer given by Christ unsatisfactory; we may replace it by another and better, by finding a criterion by which evil could be defined for all men unanimously and simultaneously; we may simply, like savage nations, not recognize the existence of the question. But we cannot treat the question as the learned critics of Christianity do. They pretend either that no such question exists at all or that the question is solved by granting to certain persons or assemblies of persons the right to define evil and to resist it by force. But we know all the while that granting such a right to certain persons does not decide the question (still less so when we are ourselves the certain persons), since there are always people who do not recognize this right in the authorized persons or assemblies.

But this assumption, that what seems evil to us is really evil, shows a complete misunderstanding of the question, and lies at the root of the argument of freethinking critics about the Christian religion. In this way, then, the discussions of my book on the part of Churchmen and freethinking critics alike showed me that the majority of men simply do not understand either Christ's teaching or the questions which Christ's teaching solves.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD BY BELIEVERS

Meaning of Christian Doctrine, Understood by a Minority, has Become Completely Incomprehensible for the Majority of Men – Reason of this to be Found in Misinterpretation of Christianity and Mistaken Conviction of Believers and Unbelievers Alike that they Understand it – The Meaning of Christianity Obscured for Believers by the Church – The First Appearance of Christ's Teaching – Its Essence and Difference from Heathen Religions – Christianity not Fully Comprehended at the Beginning, Became More and More Clear to those who Accepted it from its Correspondence with Truth – Simultaneously with this Arose the Claim to Possession of the Authentic Meaning of the Doctrine Based on the Miraculous Nature of its Transmission – Assembly of Disciples as Described in the Acts – The Authoritative Claim to the Sole Possession of the True Meaning of Christ's Teaching Supported by Miraculous Evidence has Led by Logical Development to the Creeds of the Churches – A Church Could Not be Founded by Christ – Definitions of a Church According to the Catechisms – The Churches have Always been Several in Number and Hostile to One Another – What is Heresy – The Work of G. Arnold on Heresies – Heresies the Manifestations of Progress in the Churches – Churches Cause Dissension among Men, and are Always Hostile to Christianity – Account of the Work Done by the Russian Church – Matt. xxiii. 23 – The Sermon on the Mount or the Creed – The Orthodox Church Conceals from the People the True Meaning of Christianity – The Same Thing is Done by the Other Churches – All the External Conditions of Modern Life are such as to Destroy the Doctrine of the Church, and therefore the Churches use Every Effort to Support their Doctrines.

Thus the information I received, after my book came out, went to show that the Christian doctrine, in its direct and simple sense, was understood, and had always been understood, by a minority of men, while the critics, ecclesiastical and freethinking alike, denied the possibility of taking Christ's teaching in its direct sense. All this convinced me that while on one hand the true understanding of this doctrine had never been lost to a minority, but had been established more and more clearly, on the other hand the meaning of it had been more and more obscured for the majority. So that at last such a depth of obscurity has been reached that men do not take in their direct sense even the simplest precepts, expressed in the simplest words, in the Gospel.

Christ's teaching is not generally understood in its true, simple, and direct sense even in these days, when the light of the Gospel has penetrated even to the darkest recesses of human consciousness; when, in the words of Christ, that which was spoken in the ear is proclaimed from the housetops; and when the Gospel is influencing every side of human life – domestic, economic, civic, legislative, and international. This lack of true understanding of Christ's words at such a time would be inexplicable, if there were not causes to account for it.

One of these causes is the fact that believers and unbelievers alike are firmly persuaded that they have understood Christ's teaching a long time, and that they understand it so fully, indubitably, and conclusively that it can have no other significance than the one they attribute to it. And the reason of this conviction is that the false interpretation and consequent misapprehension of the Gospel is an error of such long standing. Even the strongest current of water cannot add a drop to a cup which is already full.

The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him.

The Christian doctrine is presented to the men of our world to-day as a doctrine which everyone has known so long and accepted so unhesitatingly in all its minutest details that it cannot be understood in any other way than it is understood now.

Christianity is understood now by all who profess the doctrines of the Church as a supernatural miraculous revelation of everything which is repeated in the Creed. By unbelievers it is regarded as an illustration of man's craving for a belief in the supernatural, which mankind has now outgrown, as an historical phenomenon which has received full expression in Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, and has no longer any living significance for us. The significance of the Gospel is hidden from believers by the Church, from unbelievers by Science.

I will speak first of the former. Eighteen hundred years ago there appeared in the midst of the heathen Roman world a strange new doctrine, unlike any of the old religions, and attributed to a man, Christ.

This new doctrine was in both form and content absolutely new to the Jewish world in which it originated, and still more to the Roman world in which it was preached and diffused.

In the midst of the elaborate religious observances of Judaism, in which, in the words of Isaiah, law was laid upon law, and in the midst of the Roman legal system worked out to the highest point of perfection, a new doctrine appeared, which denied not only every deity, and all fear and worship of them, but even all human institutions and all necessity for them. In place of all the rules of the old religions, this doctrine sets up only a type of inward perfection, truth, and love in the person of Christ, and – as a result of this inward perfection being attained by men – also the outward perfection foretold by the Prophets – the kingdom of God, when all men will cease to learn to make war, when all shall be taught of God and united in love, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. Instead of the threats of punishment which all the old laws of religions and governments alike laid down for non-fulfillment of their rules, instead of promises of rewards for fulfillment of them, this doctrine called men to it only because it was the truth. John vii. 17: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." John viii. 46: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? But ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Keep my sayings, and ye shall know of my sayings whether they be true." No proofs of this doctrine were offered except its truth, the correspondence of the doctrine with the truth. The whole teaching consisted in the recognition of truth and following it, in a greater and greater attainment of truth, and a closer and closer following of it in the acts of life. There are no acts in this doctrine which could justify a man and make him saved. There is only the image of truth to guide him, for inward perfection in the person of Christ, and for outward perfection in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The fulfillment of this teaching consists only in walking in the chosen way, in getting nearer to inward perfection in the imitation of Christ, and outward perfection in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The greater or less blessedness of a man depends, according to this doctrine, not on the degree of perfection to which he has attained, but on the greater or less swiftness with which he is pursuing it.

The progress toward perfection of the publican Zaccheus, of the woman that was a sinner, of the robber on the cross, is a greater state of blessedness, according to this doctrine, than the stationary righteousness of the Pharisee. The lost sheep is dearer than ninety-nine that were not lost. The prodigal son, the piece of money that was lost and found again, are dearer, more precious to God than those which have not been lost.

Every condition, according to this doctrine, is only a particular step in the attainment of inward and outward perfection, and therefore has no significance of itself. Blessedness consists

in progress toward perfection; to stand still in any condition whatever means the cessation of this blessedness.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but seek rather that your names be written in heaven." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness."

The fulfillment of this precept is only to be found in uninterrupted progress toward the attainment of ever higher truth, toward establishing more and more firmly an ever greater love within oneself, and establishing more and more widely the kingdom of God outside oneself.

It is obvious that, appearing as it did in the midst of the Jewish and heathen world, such teaching could not be accepted by the majority of men, who were living a life absolutely different from what was required by it. It is obvious, too, that even for those by whom it was accepted, it was so absolutely opposed to all their old views that it could not be comprehensible in its full significance.

It has been only by a succession of misunderstandings, errors, partial explanations, and the corrections and additions of generations that the meaning of the Christian doctrine has grown continually more and more clear to men. The Christian view of life has exerted an influence on the Jewish and heathen, and the heathen and Jewish view of life has, too, exerted an influence on the Christian. And Christianity, as the living force, has gained more and more upon the extinct Judaism and heathenism, and has grown continually clearer and clearer, as it freed itself from the admixture of falsehood which had overlaid it. Men went further and further in the attainment of the meaning of Christianity, and realized it more and more in life.

The longer mankind lived, the clearer and clearer became the meaning of Christianity, as must always be the case with every theory of life.

Succeeding generations corrected the errors of their predecessors, and grew ever nearer and nearer to a comprehension of the true meaning. It was thus from the very earliest times of Christianity. And so, too, from the earliest times of Christianity there were men who began to assert on their own authority that the meaning they attribute to the doctrine is the only true one, and as proof bring forward supernatural occurrences in support of the correctness of their interpretation.

This was the principal cause at first of the misunderstanding of the doctrine, and afterward of the complete distortion of it.

It was supposed that Christ's teaching was transmitted to men not like every other truth, but in a special miraculous way. Thus the truth of the teaching was not proved by its correspondence with the needs of the mind and the whole nature of man, but by the miraculous manner of its transmission, which was advanced as an irrefutable proof of the truth of the interpretation put on it. This hypothesis originated from misunderstanding of the teaching, and its result was to make it impossible to understand it rightly.

And this happened first in the earliest times, when the doctrine was still not so fully understood and often interpreted wrongly, as we see by the Gospels and the Acts. The less the doctrine was understood, the more obscure it appeared and the more necessary were external proofs of its truth. The proposition that we ought not to do unto others as we would not they should do unto us, did not need to be proved by miracles and needed no exercise of faith, because this proposition is in itself convincing and in harmony with man's mind and nature; but the proposition that Christ was God had to be proved by miracles completely beyond our comprehension.

The more the understanding of Christ's teaching was obscured, the more the miraculous was introduced into it; and the more the miraculous was introduced into it, the more the doctrine was strained from its meaning and the more obscure it became; and the more it was strained from its meaning and the more obscure it became, the more strongly its infallibility had to be asserted, and the less comprehensible the doctrine became.

One can see by the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles how from the earliest times the non-comprehension of the doctrine called forth the need for proofs through the miraculous and incomprehensible.

The first example in the book of Acts is the assembly which gathered together in Jerusalem to decide the question which had arisen, whether to baptize or not the uncircumcised and those who had eaten of food sacrificed to idols.

The very fact of this question being raised showed that those who discussed it did not understand the teaching of Christ, who rejected all outward observances – ablutions, purifications, fasts, and sabbaths. It was plainly said, "Not that which goeth into a man's mouth, but that which cometh out of a man's mouth, defileth him," and therefore the question of baptizing the uncircumcised could only have arisen among men who, though they loved their Master and dimly felt the grandeur of his teaching, still did not understand the teaching itself very clearly. And this was the fact.

Just in proportion to the failure of the members of the assembly to understand the doctrine was their need of external confirmation of their incomplete interpretation of it. And then to settle this question, the very asking of which proved their misunderstanding of the doctrine, there was uttered in this assembly, as is described in the Acts, that strange phrase, which was for the first time found necessary to give external confirmation to certain assertions, and which has been productive of so much evil.

That is, it was asserted that the correctness of what they had decided was guaranteed by the miraculous participation of the Holy Ghost, that is, of God, in their decision. But the assertion that the Holy Ghost, that is, God, spoke through the Apostles, in its turn wanted proof. And thus it was necessary, to confirm this, that the Holy Ghost should descend at Pentecost in tongues of fire upon those who made this assertion. (In the account of it, the descent of the Holy Ghost precedes the assembly, but the book of Acts was written much later than both events.) But the descent of the Holy Ghost too had to be proved for those who had not seen the tongues of fire (though it is not easy to understand why a tongue of fire burning above a man's head should prove that what that man is going to say will be infallibly the truth). And so arose the necessity for still more miracles and changes, raisings of the dead to life, and strikings of the living dead, and all those marvels which have been a stumbling-block to men, of which the Acts is full, and which, far from ever convincing one of the truth of the Christian doctrine, can only repel men from it. The result of such a means of confirming the truth was that the more these confirmations of truth by tales of miracles were heaped up one after another, the more the doctrine was distorted from its original meaning, and the more incomprehensible it became.

Thus it was from the earliest times, and so it went on, constantly increasing, till it reached in our day the logical climax of the dogmas of transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope, or of the bishops, or of Scripture, and of requiring a blind faith rendered incomprehensible and utterly meaningless, not in God, but in Christ, not in a doctrine, but in a person, as in Catholicism, or in persons, as in Greek Orthodoxy, or in a book, as in Protestantism. The more widely Christianity was diffused, and the greater the number of people unprepared for it who were brought under its sway, the less it was understood, the more absolutely was its infallibility insisted on, and the less possible it became to understand the true meaning of the doctrine. In the times of Constantine the whole interpretation of the doctrine had been already reduced to a *résumé*– supported by the temporal authority – of the disputes that had taken place in the Council – to a creed which reckoned off – I believe in so and so, and so and so, and so and so to the end – to one holy, Apostolic Church, which means the infallibility of those persons who call themselves the Church. So that it all amounts to a man no longer believing in God nor Christ, as they are revealed to him, but believing in what the Church orders him to believe in.

But the Church is holy; the Church was founded by Christ. God could not leave men to interpret his teaching at random – therefore he founded the Church. All those statements are so utterly untrue and unfounded that one is ashamed to refute them. Nowhere nor in anything, except in the assertion of the Church, can we find that God or Christ founded anything like what Churchmen understand by the Church. In the Gospels there is a warning against the Church, as it is an external authority, a warning most clear and obvious in the passage where it is said that Christ's followers should "call no man master." But nowhere is anything said of the foundation of what Churchmen call the Church.

The word church is used twice in the Gospels – once in the sense of an assembly of men to decide a dispute, the other time in connection with the obscure utterance about a stone – Peter, and the gates of hell. From these two passages in which the word church is used, in the signification merely of an assembly, has been deduced all that we now understand by the Church.

But Christ could not have founded the Church, that is, what we now understand by that word. For nothing like the idea of the Church as we know it now, with its sacraments, miracles, and above all its claim to infallibility, is to be found either in Christ's words or in the ideas of the men of that time.

The fact that men called what was formed afterward by the same word as Christ used for something totally different, does not give them the right to assert that Christ founded the one, true Church.

Besides, if Christ had really founded such an institution as the Church for the foundation of all his teaching and the whole faith, he would certainly have described this institution clearly and definitely, and would have given the only true Church, besides tales of miracles, which are used to support every kind of superstition, some tokens so unmistakable that no doubt of its genuineness could ever have arisen. But nothing of the sort was done by him. And there have been and still are different institutions, each calling itself the true Church.

The Catholic catechism says: "L'Eglise est la société des 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,"² understanding by the words "pasteurs légitimes" an association of men having the Pope at its head, and consisting of certain individuals bound together by a certain organization.

The Greek Orthodox catechism says: "The Church is a society founded upon earth by Jesus Christ, which is united into one whole, by one divine doctrine and by sacraments, under the rule and guidance of a priesthood appointed by God," meaning by the "priesthood appointed by God" the Greek Orthodox priesthood, consisting of certain individuals who happen to be in such or such positions.

The Lutheran catechism says: "The Church is holy Christianity, or the collection of all believers under Christ, their head, to whom the Holy Ghost through the Gospels and sacraments promises, communicates, and administers heavenly salvation," meaning that the Catholic Church is lost in error, and that the true means of salvation is in Lutheranism.

For Catholics the Church of God coincides with the Roman priesthood and the Pope. For the Greek Orthodox believer the Church of God coincides with the establishment and priesthood of Russia.³

² "The Church is the society of the faithful, established by our Lord Jesus Christ, spread over the whole earth, and subject to the authority of its lawful pastors, and chief of them our Holy Father the Pope."

³ Homyakov's definition of the Church, which was received with some favor among Russians, does not improve matters, if we are to agree with Homyakov in considering the Greek Orthodox Church as the one true Church. Homyakov asserts that a church is a collection of men (all without distinction of clergy and laymen) united together by love, and that only to men united by love is the truth revealed (let us love each other, that in the unity of thought, etc.), and that such a church is the church which, in the first place, recognizes the Nicene Creed, and in the second place does not, after the division of the churches, recognize the popes and new dogmas. But with such a definition of the church, there is still more difficulty in reconciling, as Homyakov tries to do, the church

For Lutherans the Church of God coincides with a body of men who recognize the authority of the Bible and Luther's catechism.

Ordinarily, when speaking of the rise of Christianity, men belonging to one of the existing churches use the word church in the singular, as though there were and had been only one church. But this is absolutely incorrect. The Church, as an institution which asserted that it possessed infallible truth, did not make its appearance singly; there were at least two churches directly this claim was made.

While believers were agreed among themselves and the body was one, it had no need to declare itself as a church. It was only when believers were split up into opposing parties, renouncing one another, that it seemed necessary to each party to confirm their own truth by ascribing to themselves infallibility. The conception of one church only arose when there were two sides divided and disputing, who each called the other side heresy, and recognized their own side only as the infallible church.

If we knew that there was a church which decided in the year 51 to receive the uncircumcised, it is only so because there was another church – of the Judaists – who decided to keep the uncircumcised out.

If there is a Catholic Church now which asserts its own infallibility, that is only because there are churches – Greco-Russian, Old Orthodox, and Lutheran – each asserting its own infallibility and denying that of all other churches. So that the one Church is only a fantastic imagination which has not the least trace of reality about it.

As a real historical fact there has existed, and still exist, several bodies of men, each asserting that it is the one Church, founded by Christ, and that all the others who call themselves churches are only sects and heresies.

The catechisms of the churches of the most world-wide influence – the Catholic, the Old Orthodox, and the Lutheran – openly assert this.

In the Catholic catechism it is said: "Quels sont ceux qui sont hors de l'église? Les infidèles, les hérétiques, les schismatiques."⁴ The so-called Greek Orthodox are regarded as schismatics, the Lutherans as heretics; so that according to the Catholic catechism the only people in the Church are Catholics.

In the so-called Orthodox catechism it is said: By the one Christian Church is understood the Orthodox, which remains fully in accord with the Universal Church. As for the Roman Church and other sects (the Lutherans and the rest they do not even dignify by the name of church), they cannot be included in the one true Church, since they have themselves separated from it.

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

The Lutheran catechism says: "Die wahre Kirche wird darein erkannt, dass in ihr das Wort Gottes lauter und rein ohne Menschenzusätze gelehrt und die Sacramente treu nach Christi Einsetzung gewahret werden."⁵

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 there are only Protestants.

united by love with the church that recognizes the Nicene Creed and the doctrine of Photius. So that Homyakov's assertion that this church, united by love, and consequently holy, is the same church as the Greek Orthodox priesthood profess faith in, is even more arbitrary than the assertions of the Catholics or the Orthodox. If we admit the idea of a church in the sense Homyakov gives to it – that is, a body of men bound together by love and truth – then all that any man can predicate in regard to this body, if such an one exists, is its love and truth, but there can be no outer signs by which one could reckon oneself or another as a member of this holy body, nor by which one could put anyone outside it; so that no institution having an external existence can correspond to this idea.

⁴ "Who are those who are outside the Church? Infidels, heretics, and schismatics."

⁵ "The true Church will be known by the Word of God being studied clear and unmixed with man's additions and the sacraments being maintained faithful to Christ's teaching."

The Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost has been transmitted without a break in their priesthood. The Orthodox assert that the same Holy Ghost has been transmitted without a break in their priesthood. The Arians asserted that the Holy Ghost was transmitted in their priesthood (they asserted this with just as much right as the churches in authority now). The Protestants of every kind – Lutherans, Reformed Church, Presbyterians, Methodists, Swedenborgians, Mormons – assert that the Holy Ghost is only present in their communities. If the Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost, at the time of the division of the Church into Arian and Greek, left the Church that fell away and remained in the one true Church, with precisely the same right the Protestants of every denomination can assert that at the time of the separation of their Church from the Catholic the Holy Ghost left the Catholic and passed into the Church they professed. And this is just what they do.

Every church traces its creed through an uninterrupted transmission from Christ and the Apostles. And truly every Christian creed that has been derived from Christ must have come down to the present generation through a certain transmission. But that does not prove that it alone of all that has been transmitted, excluding all the rest, can be the sole truth, admitting of no doubt.

Every branch in a tree comes from the root in unbroken connection; but the fact that each branch comes from the one root, does not prove at all that each branch was the only one. It is precisely the same with the Church. Every church presents exactly the same proofs of the succession, and even the same miracles, in support of its authenticity, as every other. So that there is but one strict and exact definition of what is a church (not of something fantastic which we would wish it to be, but of what it is and has been in reality) – a church is a body of men who claim for themselves that they are in complete and sole possession of the truth. And these bodies, having in course of time, aided by the support of the temporal authorities, developed into powerful institutions, have been the principal obstacles to the diffusion of a true comprehension of the teaching of Christ.

It could not be otherwise. The chief peculiarity which distinguished Christ's teaching from previous religions consisted in the fact that those who accepted it strove ever more and more to comprehend and realize its teaching. But the Church doctrine asserted its own complete and final comprehension and realization of it.

Strange though it may seem to us who have been brought up in the erroneous view of the Church as a Christian institution, and in contempt for heresy, yet the fact is that only in what was called heresy was there any true movement, that is, true Christianity, and that it only ceased to be so when those heresies stopped short in their movement and also petrified into the fixed forms of a church.

And, indeed, what is a heresy? Read all the theological works one after another. In all of them heresy is the subject which first presents itself for definition; since every theological work deals with the true doctrine of Christ as distinguished from the erroneous doctrines which surround it, that is, heresies. Yet you will not find anywhere anything like a definition of heresy.

The treatment of this subject by the learned historian of Christianity, E. de Pressensé, in his "Histoire du Dogme" (Paris, 1869), under the heading "Ubi Christus, ibi Ecclesia," may serve as an illustration of the complete absence of anything like a definition of what is understood by the word heresy. Here is what he says in his introduction (p. 3): "Je sais que l'on nous conteste le droit de qualifier 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 ce scrupule, car il n'irait à rien moins qu'à enlever au Christianisme tout caractère distinctif."⁶

⁶ "I know that our right to qualify thus the tendencies which were so actively opposed by the early Fathers is contested. The very use of the word heresy seems an attack upon liberty of conscience and thought. We cannot share this scruple; for it would amount to nothing less than depriving Christianity of all distinctive character."

And though he tells us that after Constantine's time the Church did actually abuse its power by designating those who dissented from it as heretics and persecuting them, yet he says, when speaking of early times: "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 fonds 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 serons-nous 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'Eglise les traits caractéristiques de l'une des religions du passé? Pour dire que le gnosticisme ou l'ébionitisme 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'eût osé couvrir de son nom une doctrine qui n'eut pas fait place à la théorie des idées; et l'on eût 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 ou une doctrine qui s'appelle christianisme, elle peut avoir ses hérésies."⁷

The author's whole argument amounts to this: that every opinion which differs from the code of dogmas we believe in at a given time, is heresy. But of course at any given time and place men always believe in something or other; and this belief in something, indefinite at any place, at some time, cannot be a criterion of truth.

It all amounts to this: since *ubi Christus ibi Ecclesia*, then Christus is where we are.

Every so-called heresy, regarding, as it does, its own creed as the truth, can just as easily find in Church history a series of illustrations of its own creed, can use all Pressensé's arguments on its own behalf, and can call its own creed the one truly Christian creed. And that is just what all heresies do and have always done.

The only definition of heresy (the word *αἵρεσις*, means a part) is this: the name given by a body of men to any opinion which rejects a part of the Creed professed by that body. The more frequent meaning, more often ascribed to the word heresy, is – that of an opinion which rejects the Church doctrine founded and supported by the temporal authorities.

There is a remarkable and voluminous work, very little known, "Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie," 1729, by Gottfried Arnold, which deals with precisely this subject, and points out all the unlawfulness, the arbitrariness, the senselessness, and the cruelty of using the word heretic in the sense of reprobate. This book is an attempt to write the history of Christianity in the form of a history of heresy.

⁷ "The Church is a free association; there is much to be gained by separation from it. Conflict with error has no weapons other than thought and feeling. One uniform type of doctrine has not yet been elaborated; divergencies in secondary matters arise freely in East and West; theology is not wedded to invariable formulas. If in the midst of this diversity a mass of beliefs common to all is apparent, is one not justified in seeing in it, not a formulated system, framed by the representatives of pedantic authority, but faith itself in its surest instinct and its most spontaneous manifestation? If the same unanimity which is revealed in essential points of belief is found also in rejecting certain tendencies, are we not justified in concluding that these tendencies were in flagrant opposition to the fundamental principles of Christianity? And will not this presumption be transformed into certainty if we recognize in the doctrine universally rejected by the Church the characteristic features of one of the religions of the past? To say that gnosticism or ebionitism are legitimate forms of Christian thought, one must boldly deny the existence of Christian thought at all, or any specific character by which it could be recognized. While ostensibly widening its realm, one undermines it. No one in the time of Plato would have ventured to give his name to a doctrine in which the theory of ideas had no place, and one would deservedly have excited the ridicule of Greece by trying to pass off Epicurus or Zeno as a disciple of the Academy. Let us recognize, then, that if a religion or a doctrine exists which is called Christianity, it may have its heresies."

In the introduction the author propounds a series of questions: (1) Of those who make heretics; (2) Of those whom they made heretics; (3) Of heretical subjects themselves; (4) Of the method of making heretics; and (5) Of the object and result of making heretics.

On each of these points he propounds ten more questions, the answers to which he gives later on from the works of well-known theologians. But he leaves the reader to draw for himself the principal conclusion from the expositions in the whole book. As examples of these questions, in which the answers are to some extent included also, I will quote the following. Under the 4th head, of the manner in which heretics are made, he says, in one of the questions (in the 7th):

"Does not all history show that the greatest makers of heretics and masters of that craft were just these wise men, from whom the Father hid his secrets, that is, the hypocrites, the Pharisees, and lawyers, men utterly godless and perverted (Question 20-21)? And in the corrupt times of Christianity were not these very men cast out, denounced by the hypocrites and envious, who were endowed by God with great gifts and who would in the days of pure Christianity have been held in high honor? And, on the other hand, would not the men who, in the decline of Christianity raised themselves above all, and regarded themselves as the teachers of the purest Christianity, would not these very men, in the times of the apostles and disciples of Christ, have been regarded as the most shameless heretics and anti-Christians?"

He expounds, among other things in these questions, the theory that any verbal expression of faith, such as was demanded by the Church, and the departure from which was reckoned as heresy, could never fully cover the exact religious ideas of a believer, and that therefore the demand for an expression of faith in certain words was ever productive of heresy, and he says, in Question 21:

"And if heavenly things and thoughts present themselves to a man's mind as so great and so profound that he does not find corresponding words to express them, ought one to call him a heretic, because he cannot express his idea with perfect exactness?" And in Question 33:

"And is not the fact that there was no heresy in the earliest days due to the fact that the Christians did not judge one another by verbal expressions, but by deed and by heart, since they had perfect liberty to express their ideas without the dread of being called heretics; was it not the easiest and most ordinary ecclesiastical proceeding, if the clergy wanted to get rid of or to ruin anyone, for them to cast suspicion on the person's belief, and to throw a cloak of heresy upon him, and by this means to procure his condemnation and removal?"

"True though it may be that there were sins and errors among the so-called heretics, it is no less true and evident," he says farther on, "from the innumerable examples quoted here (*i. e.*, in the history of the Church and of heresy), that there was not a single sincere and conscientious man of any importance whom the Churchmen would not from envy or other causes have ruined."

Thus, almost two hundred years ago, the real meaning of heresy was understood. And notwithstanding that, the same conception of it has gone on existing up to now. And it cannot fail to exist so long as the conception of a church exists. Heresy is the obverse side of the Church. Wherever there is a church, there must be the conception of heresy. A church is a body of men who assert that they are in possession of infallible truth. Heresy is the opinion of the men who do not admit the infallibility of the Church's truth.

Heresy makes its appearance in the Church. It is the effort to break through the petrified authority of the Church. All effort after a living comprehension of the doctrine has been made by heretics. Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Luther, Huss, Savonarola, Helchitsky, and the rest were heretics. It could not be otherwise.

The follower of Christ, whose service means an ever-growing understanding of his teaching, and an ever-closer fulfillment of it, in progress toward perfection, cannot, just because he is a follower of Christ, claim for himself or any other that he understands Christ's teaching fully and fulfills it. Still less can he claim this for any body of men.

To whatever degree of understanding and perfection the follower of Christ may have attained, he always feels the insufficiency of his understanding and fulfillment of it, and is always striving toward a fuller understanding and fulfillment. And therefore, to assert of one's self or of any body of men, that one is or they are in possession of perfect understanding and fulfillment of Christ's word, is to renounce the very spirit of Christ's teaching.

Strange as it may seem, the churches as churches have always been, and cannot but be, institutions not only alien in spirit to Christ's teaching, but even directly antagonistic to it. With good reason Voltaire calls the Church *l'infâme*; with good reason have all or almost all so-called sects of Christians recognized the Church as the scarlet woman foretold in the Apocalypse; with good reason is the history of the Church the history of the greatest cruelties and horrors.

The churches as churches are not, as many people suppose, institutions which have Christian principles for their basis, even though they may have strayed a little away from the straight path. The churches as churches, as bodies which assert their own infallibility, are institutions opposed to Christianity. There is not only nothing in common between the churches as such and Christianity, except the name, but they represent two principles fundamentally opposed and antagonistic to one another. One represents pride, violence, self-assertion, stagnation, and death; the other, meekness, penitence, humility, progress, and life.

We cannot serve these two masters; we have to choose between them.

The servants of the churches of all denominations, especially of later times, try to show themselves champions of progress in Christianity. They make concessions, wish to correct the abuses that have slipped into the Church, and maintain that one cannot, on account of these abuses, deny the principle itself of a Christian church, which alone can bind all men together in unity and be a mediator between men and God. But this is all a mistake. Not only have the churches never bound men together in unity; they have always been one of the principal causes of division between men, of their hatred of one another, of wars, battles, inquisitions, massacres of St. Bartholomew, and so on. And the churches have never served as mediators between men and God. Such mediation is not wanted, and was directly forbidden by Christ, who has revealed his teaching directly and immediately to each man. But the churches set up dead forms in the place of God, and far from revealing God, they obscure him from men's sight. The churches, which originated from misunderstanding of Christ's teaching and have maintained this misunderstanding by their immovability, cannot but persecute and refuse to recognize all true understanding of Christ's words. They try to conceal this, but in vain; for every step forward along the path pointed out for us by Christ is a step toward their destruction.

To hear and to read the sermons and articles in which Church writers of later times of all denominations speak of Christian truths and virtues; to hear or read these skillful arguments that have been elaborated during centuries, and exhortations and professions, which sometimes seem like sincere professions, one is ready to doubt whether the churches can be antagonistic to Christianity. "It cannot be," one says, "that these people who can point to such men as Chrysostom, Fénelon, Butler, and others professing the Christian faith, were antagonistic to Christianity." One is tempted to say, "The churches may have strayed away from Christianity, they may be in error, but they cannot be hostile to it." But we must look to the fruit to judge the tree, as Christ taught us. And if we see that their fruits were evil, that the results of their activity were antagonistic to Christianity, we cannot but admit that however good the men were – the work of the Church in which these men took part was not Christian. The goodness and worth of these men who served the churches was the goodness and worth of the men, and not of the institution they served. All the good men, such as Francis of Assisi, and Francis of Sales, our Tihon Zadonsky, Thomas à Kempis, and others, were good men in spite of their serving an institution hostile to Christianity, and they would have been still better if they had not been under the influence of the error which they were serving.

But why should we speak of the past and judge from the past, which may have been misrepresented and misunderstood by us? The churches, with their principles and their practice, are not a thing of the past. The churches are before us to-day, and we can judge of them to some purpose by their practical activity, their influence on men.

What is the practical work of the churches to-day? What is their influence upon men? What is done by the churches among us, among the Catholics and the Protestants of all denominations – what is their practical work? and what are the results of their practical work?

The practice of our Russian so-called Orthodox Church is plain to all. It is an enormous fact which there is no possibility of hiding and about which there can be no disputing.

What constitutes the practical work of this Russian Church, this immense, intensely active institution, which consists of a regiment of half a million men and costs the people tens of millions of rubles?

The practical business of the Church consists in instilling by every conceivable means into the mass of one hundred millions of the Russian people those extinct relics of beliefs for which there is nowadays no kind of justification, "in which scarcely anyone now believes, and often not even those whose duty it is to diffuse these false beliefs." To instill into the people the formulas of Byzantine theology, of the Trinity, of the Mother of God, of Sacraments, of Grace, and so on, extinct conceptions, foreign to us, and having no kind of meaning for men of our times, forms only one part of the work of the Russian Church. Another part of its practice consists in the maintenance of idol-worship in the most literal meaning of the word; in the veneration of holy relics, and of ikons, the offering of sacrifices to them, and the expectation of their answers to prayer. I am not going to speak of what is preached and what is written by clergy of scientific or liberal tendencies in the theological journals. I am going to speak of what is actually done by the clergy through the wide expanse of the Russian land among a people of one hundred millions. What do they, diligently, assiduously, everywhere alike, without intermission, teach the people? What do they demand from the people in virtue of their (so-called) Christian faith?

I will begin from the beginning with the birth of a child. At the birth of a child they teach them that they must recite a prayer over the child and mother to purify them, as though without this prayer the mother of a newborn child were unclean. To do this the priest holds the child in his arms before the images of the saints (called by the people plainly gods) and reads words of exorcizing power, and this purifies the mother. Then it is suggested to the parents, and even exacted of them, under fear of punishment for non-fulfillment, that the child must be baptized; that is, be dipped by the priest three times into the water, while certain words, understood by no one, are read aloud, and certain actions, still less understood, are performed; various parts of the body are rubbed with oil, and the hair is cut, while the sponsors blow and spit at an imaginary devil. All this is necessary to purify the child and to make him a Christian. Then it is instilled into the parents that they ought to administer the sacrament to the child, that is, give him, in the guise of bread and wine, a portion of Christ's body to eat, as a result of which the child receives the grace of God within it, and so on. Then it is suggested that the child as it grows up must be taught to pray. To pray means to place himself directly before the wooden boards on which are painted the faces of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints, to bow his head and his whole body, and to touch his forehead, his shoulders and his stomach with his right hand, holding his fingers in a certain position, and to utter some words of Slavonic, the most usual of which as taught to all children are: Mother of God, virgin, rejoice thee, etc., etc.

Then it is instilled into the child as it is brought up that at the sight of any church or ikon he must repeat the same action — *i. e.*, cross himself. Then it is instilled into him that on holidays (holidays are the days on which Christ was born, though no one knows when that was, on which he was circumcised, on which the Mother of God died, on which the cross was carried in procession, on which ikons have been set up, on which a lunatic saw a vision, and so on) – on holidays he

must dress himself in his best clothes and go to church, and must buy candles and place them there before the images of the saints. Then he must give offerings and prayers for the dead, and little loaves to be cut up into three-cornered pieces, and must pray many times for the health and prosperity of the Tzar and the bishops, and for himself and his own affairs, and then kiss the cross and the hand of the priest.

Besides these observances, it is instilled into him that at least once a year he must confess. To confess means to go to the church and to tell the priest his sins, on the theory that this informing a stranger of his sins completely purifies him from them. And after that he must eat with a little spoon a morsel of bread with wine, which will purify him still more. Next it is instilled into him that if a man and woman want their physical union to be sanctified they must go to church, put on metal crowns, drink certain potions, walk three times round a table to the sound of singing, and that then the physical union of a man and woman becomes sacred and altogether different from all other such unions.

Further it is instilled into him in his life that he must observe the following rules: not to eat butter or milk on certain days, and on certain other days to sing Te Deums and requiems for the dead, on holidays to entertain the priest and give him money, and several times in the year to bring the ikons from the church, and to carry them slung on his shoulders through the fields and houses. It is instilled into him that on his death-bed a man must not fail to eat bread and wine with a spoon, and that it will be still better if he has time to be rubbed with sacred oil. This will guarantee his welfare in the future life. After his death it is instilled into his relatives that it is a good thing for the salvation of the dead man to place a printed paper of prayers in his hands; it is a good thing further to read aloud a certain book over the dead body, and to pronounce the dead man's name in church at a certain time. All this is regarded as faith obligatory on everyone.

But if anyone wants to take particular care of his soul, then according to this faith he is instructed that the greatest security of the salvation of the soul in the world is attained by offering money to the churches and monasteries, and engaging the holy men by this means to pray for him. Entering monasteries too, and kissing relics and miraculous ikons, are further means of salvation for the soul.

According to this faith ikons and relics communicate a special sanctity, power, and grace, and even proximity to these objects, touching them, kissing them, putting candles before them, crawling under them while they are being carried along, are all efficacious for salvation, as well as Te Deums repeated before these holy things.

So this, and nothing else, is the faith called Orthodox, that is the actual faith which, under the guise of Christianity, has been with all the forces of the Church, and is now with especial zeal, instilled into the people.

And let no one say that the Orthodox teachers place the essential part of their teaching in something else, and that all these are only ancient forms, which it is not thought necessary to do away with. That is false. This, and nothing but this, is the faith taught through the whole of Russia by the whole of the Russian clergy, and of late years with especial zeal. There is nothing else taught. Something different may be talked of and written of in the capitals; but among the hundred millions of the people this is what is done, this is what is taught, and nothing more. Churchmen may talk of something else, but this is what they teach by every means in their power.

All this, and the worship of relics and of ikons, has been introduced into works of theology and into the catechisms. Thus they teach it to the people in theory and in practice, using every resource of authority, solemnity, pomp, and violence to impress them. They compel the people, by overawing them, to believe in this, and jealously guard this faith from any attempt to free the people from these barbarous superstitions.

As I said when I published my book, Christ's teaching and his very words about non-resistance to evil were for many years a subject for ridicule and low jesting in my eyes, and

Churchmen, far from opposing it, even encouraged this scoffing at sacred things. But try the experiment of saying a disrespectful word about a hideous idol which is carried sacrilegiously about Moscow by drunken men under the name of the ikon of the Iversky virgin, and you will raise a groan of indignation from these same Churchmen. All that they preach is an external observance of the rites of idolatry. And let it not be said that the one does not hinder the other, that "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." "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 was spoken of the Pharisees, who fulfilled all the external observances prescribed by the law, and therefore the words "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do," refer to works of mercy and goodness, and the words "do not ye after their works, for they say and do not," refer to their observance of ceremonies and their neglect of good works, and have exactly the opposite meaning to that which the Churchmen try to give to the passage, interpreting it as an injunction to observe ceremonies. External observances and the service of truth and goodness are for the most part difficult to combine; the one excludes the other. So it was with the Pharisees, so it is now with Church Christians.

If a man can be saved by the redemption, by sacraments, and by prayer, then he does not need good works.

The Sermon on the Mount, or the Creed. One cannot believe in both. And Churchmen have chosen the latter. The Creed is taught and is read as a prayer in the churches, but the Sermon on the Mount is excluded even from the Gospel passages read in the churches, so that the congregation never hears it in church, except on those days when the whole of the Gospel is read. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. People who believe in a wicked and senseless God – who has cursed the human race and devoted his own Son to sacrifice, and a part of mankind to eternal torment – cannot believe in the God of love. The man who believes in a God, in a Christ coming again in glory to judge and to punish the quick and the dead, cannot believe in the Christ who bade us turn the left cheek, judge not, forgive those that wrong us, and love our enemies. The man who believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament and the sacred character of David, who commanded on his deathbed the murder of an old man who had cursed him, and whom he could not kill himself because he was bound by an oath to him, and the similar atrocities of which the Old Testament is full, cannot believe in the holy love of Christ. The man who believes in the Church's doctrine of the compatibility of warfare and capital punishment with Christianity cannot believe in the brotherhood of all men.

And what is most important of all – the man who believes in salvation through faith in the redemption or the sacraments, cannot devote all his powers to realizing Christ's moral teaching in his life.

The man who has been instructed by the Church in the profane doctrine that a man cannot be saved by his own powers, but that there is another means of salvation, will infallibly rely upon this means and not on his own powers, which, they assure him, it is sinful to trust in.

The teaching of every Church, with its redemption and sacraments, excludes the teaching of Christ; most of all the teaching of the Orthodox Church with its idolatrous observances.

"But the people have always believed of their own accord as they believe now," will be said in answer to this. "The whole history of the Russian people proves it. One cannot deprive the people of their traditions." This statement, too, is misleading. The people did certainly at one time believe in something like what the Church believes in now, though it was far from being the same thing. In spite of their superstitious regard for ikons, house-spirits, relics, and festivals with wreaths of birch leaves, there has still always been in the people a profound moral and living understanding of Christianity, which there has never been in the Church as a whole, and which is only met with in its best representatives. But the people, notwithstanding all the prejudices instilled into them by the government and the Church, have in their best representatives long outgrown that crude stage of understanding, a fact which is proved by the springing up everywhere of the rationalist sects with

which Russia is swarming to-day, and on which Churchmen are now carrying on an ineffectual warfare. The people are advancing to a consciousness of the moral, living side of Christianity. And then the Church comes forward, not borrowing from the people, but zealously instilling into them the petrified formalities of an extinct paganism, and striving to thrust them back again into the darkness from which they are emerging with such effort.

"We teach the people nothing new, nothing but what they believe, only in a more perfect form," say the Churchmen. This is just what the man did who tied up the full-grown chicken and thrust it back into the shell it had come out of.

I have often been irritated, though it would be comic if the consequences were not so awful, by observing how men shut one another in a delusion and cannot get out of this magic circle.

The first question, the first doubt of a Russian who is beginning to think, is a question about the ikons, and still more the miraculous relics: Is it true that they are genuine, and that miracles are worked through them? Hundreds of thousands of men put this question to themselves, and their principal difficulty in answering it is the fact that bishops, metropolitans, and all men in positions of authority kiss the relics and wonder-working ikons. Ask the bishops and men in positions of authority why they do so, and they will say they do it for the sake of the people, while the people kiss them because the bishops and men in authority do so.

In spite of all the external varnish of modernity, learning, and spirituality which the members of the Church begin nowadays to assume in their works, their articles, their theological journals, and their sermons, the practical work of the Russian Church consists of nothing more than keeping the people in their present condition of coarse and savage idolatry, and worse still, strengthening and diffusing superstition and religious ignorance, and suppressing that living understanding of Christianity which exists in the people side by side with idolatry.

I remember once being present in the monks' bookshop of the Optchy Hermitage while an old peasant was choosing books for his grandson, who could read. A monk pressed on him accounts of relics, holidays, miraculous ikons, a psalter, etc. I asked the old man, "Has he the Gospel?" "No." "Give him the Gospel in Russian," I said to the monk. "That will not do for him," answered the monk. There you have an epitome of the work of our Church.

But this is only in barbarous Russia, the European and American reader will observe. And such an observation is just, but only so far as it refers to the government, which aids the Church in its task of stultification and corruption in Russia.

It is true that there is nowhere in Europe a government so despotic and so closely allied with the ruling Church. And therefore the share of the temporal power in the corruption of the people is greatest in Russia. But it is untrue that the Russian Church in its influence on the people is in any respect different from any other church.

The churches are everywhere the same, and if the Catholic, the Anglican, or the Lutheran Church has not at hand a government as compliant as the Russian, it is not due to any indisposition to profit by such a government.

The Church as a church, whatever it may be – Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian – every church, in so far as it is a church, cannot but strive for the same object as the Russian Church. That object is to conceal the real meaning of Christ's teaching and to replace it by their own, which lays no obligation on them, excludes the possibility of understanding the true teaching of Christ, and what is the chief consideration, justifies the existence of priests supported at the people's expense.

What else has Catholicism done, what else is it doing in its prohibition of reading the Gospel, and in its demand for unreasoning submission to Church authorities and to an infallible Pope? Is the religion of Catholicism any other than that of the Russian Church? There is the same external ritual, the same relics, miracles, and wonder-working images of Notre Dame, and the same processions; the same loftily vague discussions of Christianity in books and sermons, and when it comes to

practice, the same supporting of the present idolatry. And is not the same thing done in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and every denomination of Protestantism which has been formed into a church? There is the same duty laid on their congregations to believe in the dogmas expressed in the fourth century, which have lost all meaning for men of our times, and the same duty of idolatrous worship, if not of relics and ikons, then of the Sabbath Day and the letter of the Bible. There is always the same activity directed to concealing the real duties of Christianity, and to putting in their place an external respectability and cant, as it is so well described by the English, who are peculiarly oppressed by it. In Protestantism this tendency is specially remarkable because it has not the excuse of antiquity. And does not exactly the same thing show itself even in contemporary revivalism – the revived Calvinism and Evangelicalism, to which the Salvation Army owes its origin?

Uniform is the attitude of all the churches to the teaching of Christ, whose name they assume for their own advantage.

The inconsistency of all church forms of religion with the teaching of Christ is, of course, the reason why special efforts are necessary to conceal this inconsistency from people. Truly, we need only imagine ourselves in the position of any grown-up man, not necessarily educated, even the simplest man of the present day, who has picked up the ideas that are everywhere in the air nowadays of geology, physics, chemistry, cosmography, or history, when he, for the first time, consciously compares them with the articles of belief instilled into him in childhood, and maintained by the churches – that God created the world in six days, and light before the sun; that Noah shut up all the animals in his ark, and so on; that Jesus is also God the Son, who created all before time was; that this God came down upon earth to atone for Adam's sin; that he rose again, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and will come in the clouds to judge the world, and so on. All these propositions, elaborated by men of the fourth century, had a certain meaning for men of that time, but for men of to-day they have no meaning whatever. Men of the present day can repeat these words with their lips, but believe them they cannot. For such sentences as that God lives in heaven, that the heavens opened and a voice from somewhere said something, that Christ rose again, and ascended somewhere in heaven, and again will come from somewhere on the clouds, and so on, have no meaning for us.

A man who regarded the heavens as a solid, finite vault could believe or disbelieve that God created the heavens, that the heavens opened, that Christ ascended into heaven, but for us all these phrases have no sense whatever. Men of the present can only believe, as indeed they do, that they ought to believe in this; but believe it they cannot, because it has no meaning for them.

Even if all these phrases ought to be interpreted in a figurative sense and are allegories, we know that in the first place all Churchmen are not agreed about it, but, on the contrary, the majority stick to understanding the Holy Scripture in its literal sense; and secondly, that these allegorical interpretations are very varied and are not supported by any evidence.

But even if a man wants to force himself to believe in the doctrines of the Church just as they are taught to him, the universal diffusion of education and of the Gospel and of communication between people of different forms of religion presents a still more insurmountable obstacle to his doing so.

A man of the present day need only buy a Gospel for three copecks and read through the plain words, admitting of no misinterpretation, that Christ said to the Samaritan woman "that the Father seeketh not worshipers at Jerusalem, nor in this mountain nor in that, but worshipers in spirit and in truth," or the saying that "the Christian must not pray like the heathen, nor for show, but secretly, that is, in his closet," or that Christ's follower must call no man master or father – he need only read these words to be thoroughly convinced that the Church pastors, who call themselves teachers in opposition to Christ's precept, and dispute among themselves, constitute no kind of authority, and that what the Churchmen teach us is not Christianity. Less even than that is necessary. Even if a man nowadays did continue to believe in miracles and did not read the Gospel, mere association

with people of different forms of religion and faith, which happens so easily in these days, compels him to doubt of the truth of his own faith. It was all very well when a man did not see men of any other form of religion than his own; he believed that his form of religion was the one true one. But a thinking man has only to come into contact – as constantly happens in these days – with people, equally good and bad, of different denominations, who condemn each other's beliefs, to doubt of the truth of the belief he professes himself. In these days only a man who is absolutely ignorant or absolutely indifferent to the vital questions with which religion deals, can remain in the faith of the Church.

What deceptions and what strenuous efforts the churches must employ to continue, in spite of all these tendencies subversive of the faith, to build churches, to perform masses, to preach, to teach, to convert, and, most of all, to receive for it all immense emoluments, as do all these priests, pastors, incumbents, superintendents, abbots, archdeacons, bishops, and archbishops. They need special supernatural efforts. And the churches do, with ever-increasing intensity and zeal, make such efforts. With us in Russia, besides other means, they employ simple brute force, as there the temporal power is willing to obey the Church. Men who refuse an external assent to the faith, and say so openly, are either directly punished or deprived of their rights; men who strictly keep the external forms of religion are rewarded and given privileges.

That is how the Orthodox clergy proceed; but indeed all churches without exception avail themselves of every means for the purpose – one of the most important of which is what is now called hypnotism.

Every art, from architecture to poetry, is brought into requisition to work its effect on men's souls and to reduce them to a state of stupefaction, and this effect is constantly produced. This use of hypnotizing influence on men to bring them to a state of stupefaction is especially apparent in the proceedings of the Salvation Army, who employ new practices to which we are unaccustomed: trumpets, drums, songs, flags, costumes, marching, dancing, tears, and dramatic performances.

But this only displeases us because these are new practices. Were not the old practices in churches essentially the same, with their special lighting, gold, splendor, candles, choirs, organ, bells, vestments, intoning, etc.?

But however powerful this hypnotic influence may be, it is not the chief nor the most pernicious activity of the Church. The chief and most pernicious work of the Church is that which is directed to the deception of children – these very children of whom Christ said: "Woe to him that offendeth one of these little ones." From the very first awakening of the consciousness of the child they begin to deceive him, to instill into him with the utmost solemnity what they do not themselves believe in, and they continue to instill it into him till the deception has by habit grown into the child's nature. They studiously deceive the child on the most important subject in life, and when the deception has so grown into his life that it would be difficult to uproot it, then they reveal to him the whole world of science and reality, which cannot by any means be reconciled with the beliefs that have been instilled into him, leaving it to him to find his way as best he can out of these contradictions.

If one set oneself the task of trying to confuse a man so that he could not think clearly nor free himself from the perplexity of two opposing theories of life which had been instilled into him from childhood, one could not invent any means more effectual than the treatment of every young man educated in our so-called Christian society.

It is terrible to think what the churches do to men. But if one imagines oneself in the position of the men who constitute the Church, we see they could not act differently. The churches are placed in a dilemma: the Sermon on the Mount or the Nicene Creed – the one excludes the other. If a man sincerely believes in the Sermon on the Mount, the Nicene Creed must inevitably lose all meaning and significance for him, and the Church and its representatives together with it. 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 becomes superfluous for him. And therefore the churches cannot but make every possible effort to obscure the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, and to attract men to themselves. It is only due to the intense zeal of the churches in this direction that the influence of the churches has lasted hitherto.

Let the Church stop its work of hypnotizing the masses, and deceiving children even for the briefest interval of time, and men would begin to understand Christ's teaching. But this understanding will be the end of the churches and all their influence. And therefore the churches will not for an instant relax their zeal in the business of hypnotizing grown-up people and deceiving children. This, then, is the work of the churches: to instill a false interpretation of Christ's teaching into men, and to prevent a true interpretation of it for the majority of so-called believers.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD BY MEN OF SCIENCE

Attitude of Men of Science to Religions in General – What Religion is, and What is its Significance for the Life of Humanity – Three Conceptions of Life – Christian Religion the Expression of the Divine Conception of Life – Misinterpretation of Christianity by Men of Science, who Study it in its External Manifestations Due to their Criticising it from Standpoint of Social Conception of Life – Opinion, Resulting from this Misinterpretation, that Christ's Moral Teaching is Exaggerated and Cannot be put into Practice – Expression of Divine Conception of Life in the Gospel – False Ideas of Men of Science on Christianity Proceed from their Conviction that they have an Infallible Method of Criticism – From which come Two Misconceptions in Regard to Christian Doctrine – First Misconception, that the Teaching Cannot be put into Practice, Due to the Christian Religion Directing Life in a Way Different from that of the Social Theory of Life – Christianity holds up Ideal, does not lay down Rules – To the Animal Force of Man Christ Adds the Consciousness of a Divine Force – Christianity Seems to Destroy Possibility of Life only when the Ideal held up is Mistaken for Rule – Ideal Must Not be Lowered – Life, According to Christ's Teaching, is Movement – The Ideal and the Precepts – Second Misconception Shown in Replacing Love and Service of God by Love and Service of Humanity – Men of Science Imagine their Doctrine of Service of Humanity and Christianity are Identical – Doctrine of Service of Humanity Based on Social Conception of Life – Love for Humanity, Logically Deduced from Love of Self, has No Meaning because Humanity is a Fiction – Christian Love Deduced from Love of God, Finds its Object in the whole World, not in Humanity Alone – Christianity Teaches Man to Live in Accordance with his Divine Nature – It Shows that the Essence of the Soul of Man is Love, and that his Happiness Ensues from Love of God, whom he Recognizes as Love within himself.

Now I will speak of the other view of Christianity which hinders the true understanding of it – the scientific view.

Churchmen substitute for Christianity the version they have framed of it for themselves, and this view of Christianity they regard as the one infallibly true one.

Men of science regard as Christianity only the tenets held by the different churches in the past and present; and finding that these tenets have lost all the significance of Christianity, they accept it as a religion which has outlived its age.

To see clearly how impossible it is to understand the Christian teaching from such a point of view, one must form for oneself an idea of the place actually held by religions in general, by the Christian religion in particular, in the life of mankind, and of the significance attributed to them by science.

Just as the individual man cannot live without having some theory of the meaning of his life, and is always, though often unconsciously, framing his conduct in accordance with the meaning he attributes to his life, so too associations of men living in similar conditions – nations – cannot but have theories of the meaning of their associated life and conduct ensuing from those theories. And as the individual man, when he attains a fresh stage of growth, inevitably changes his philosophy

of life, and the grown-up man sees a different meaning in it from the child, so too associations of men – nations – are bound to change their philosophy of life and the conduct ensuing from their philosophy, to correspond with their development.

The difference, as regards this, between the individual man and humanity as a whole, lies in the fact that the individual, in forming the view of life proper to the new period of life on which he is entering and the conduct resulting from it, benefits by the experience of men who have lived before him, who have already passed through the stage of growth upon which he is entering. But humanity cannot have this aid, because it is always moving along a hitherto untrodden track, and has no one to ask how to understand life, and to act in the conditions on which it is entering and through which no one has ever passed before.

Nevertheless, just as a man with wife and children cannot continue to look at life as he looked at it when he was a child, so too in the face of the various changes that are taking place, the greater density of population, the establishment of communication between different peoples, the improvements of the methods of the struggle with nature, and the accumulation of knowledge, humanity cannot continue to look at life as of old, and it must frame a new theory of life, from which conduct may follow adapted to the new conditions on which it has entered and is entering.

To meet this need humanity has the special power of producing men who give a new meaning to the whole of human life – a theory of life from which follow new forms of activity quite different from all preceding them. The formation of this philosophy of life appropriate to humanity in the new conditions on which it is entering, and of the practice resulting from it, is what is called religion.

And therefore, in the first place, religion is not, as science imagines, a manifestation which at one time corresponded with the development of humanity, but is afterward outgrown by it. It is a manifestation always inherent in the life of humanity, and is as indispensable, as inherent in humanity at the present time as at any other. Secondly, religion is always the theory of the practice of the future and not of the past, and therefore it is clear that investigation of past manifestations cannot in any case grasp the essence of religion.

The essence of every religious teaching lies not in the desire for a symbolic expression of the forces of nature, nor in the dread of these forces, nor in the craving for the marvelous, nor in the external forms in which it is manifested, as men of science imagine; the essence of religion lies in the faculty of men of foreseeing and pointing out the path of life along which humanity must move in the discovery of a new theory of life, as a result of which the whole future conduct of humanity is changed and different from all that has been before.

This faculty of foreseeing the path along which humanity must move, is common in a greater or less degree to all men. But in all times there have been men in whom this faculty was especially strong, and these men have given clear and definite expression to what all men felt vaguely, and formed a new philosophy of life from which new lines of action followed for hundreds and thousands of years.

Of such philosophies of life we know three; two have already been passed through by humanity, and the third is that we are passing through now in Christianity. These philosophies of life are three in number, and only three, not because we have arbitrarily brought the various theories of life together under these three heads, but because all men's actions are always based on one of these three views of life – because we cannot view life otherwise than in these three ways.

These three views of life are as follows: First, embracing the individual, or the animal view of life; second, embracing the society, or the pagan view of life; third, embracing the whole world, or the divine view of life.

In the first theory of life a man's life is limited to his one individuality; the aim of life is the satisfaction of the will of this individuality. In the second theory of life a man's life is limited not to his own individuality, but to certain societies and classes of individuals: to the tribe, the family, the clan, the nation; the aim of life is limited to the satisfaction of the will of those associations

of individuals. In the third theory of life a man's life is limited not to societies and classes of individuals, but extends to the principle and source of life – to God.

These three conceptions of life form the foundation of all the religions that exist or have existed.

The savage recognizes life only in himself and his personal desires. His interest in life is concentrated on himself alone. The highest happiness for him is the fullest satisfaction of his desires. The motive power of his life is personal enjoyment. His religion consists in propitiating his deity and in worshiping his gods, whom he imagines as persons living only for their personal aims.

The civilized pagan recognizes life not in himself alone, but in societies of men – in the tribe, the clan, the family, the kingdom – and sacrifices his personal good for these societies. The motive power of his life is glory. His religion consists in the exaltation of the glory of those who are allied to him – the founders of his family, his ancestors, his rulers – and in worshiping gods who are exclusively protectors of his clan, his family, his nation, his government.⁸

The man who holds the divine theory of life recognizes life not in his own individuality, and not in societies of individualities (in the family, the clan, the nation, the tribe, or the government), but in the eternal undying source of life – in God; and to fulfill the will of God he is ready to sacrifice his individual and family and social welfare. The motor power of his life is love. And his religion is the worship in deed and in truth of the principle of the whole – God.

The whole historic existence of mankind is nothing else than the gradual transition from the personal, animal conception of life to the social conception of life, and from the social conception of life to the divine conception of life. The whole history of the ancient peoples, lasting through thousands of years and ending with the history of Rome, is the history of the transition from the animal, personal view of life to the social view of life. The whole of history from the time of the Roman Empire and the appearance of Christianity is the history of the transition, through which we are still passing now, from the social view of life to the divine view of life.

This view of life is the last, and founded upon it is the Christian teaching, which is a guide for the whole of our life and lies at the root of all our activity, practical and theoretic. Yet men of what is falsely called science, pseudo-scientific men, looking at it only in its externals, regard it as something outgrown and having no value for us.

Reducing it to its dogmatic side only – to the doctrines of the Trinity, the redemption, the miracles, the Church, the sacraments, and so on – men of science regard it as only one of an immense number of religions which have arisen among mankind, and now, they say, having played out its part in history, it is outliving its own age and fading away before the light of science and of true enlightenment.

⁸ The fact that so many varied forms of existence, as the life of the family, of the tribe, of the clan, of the state, and even the life of humanity theoretically conceived by the Positivists, are founded on this social or pagan theory of life, does not destroy the unity of this theory of life. All these varied forms of life are founded on the same conception, that the life of the individual is not a sufficient aim of life – that the meaning of life can be found only in societies of individuals.

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