

Leo Tolstoy

Appeal to Social Reformers

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In my "Appeal to the Working People" I expressed the opinion that if the working-men are to free themselves from oppression it is necessary that they should themselves cease to live as they now live, struggling with their neighbors for their personal welfare, and that, according to the Gospel rule, man should "act towards others as he desires that others should act towards himself."

The method I had suggested called forth, as I expected, one and the same condemnation from people of the most opposite views.

"It is an Utopia, unpractical. To wait for the liberation of men who are suffering from oppression and violence until they all become virtuous would mean—whilst recognizing the existing evil—to doom oneself to inaction."

Therefore I would like to say a few words as to why I believe this idea is not so unpractical as it appears, but, on the contrary, deserves that more attention be directed to it than to all the other methods proposed by scientific men for the improvement of the social order. I would like to say these words to those who sincerely—not in words, but in deeds—desire to serve their neighbors. It is to such people that I now address myself.

I

The ideals of social life which direct the activity of men change, and together with them the order of human life also changes. There was a time when the ideal of social life was complete animal freedom, according to which one portion of mankind, as far as they were able, devoured the other, both in the direct and in the

figurative sense. Then followed a time when the social ideal became the power of one man, and men deified their rulers, and not only willingly but enthusiastically submitted to them—Egypt, Rome: "Morituri te salutant." Next, people recognized as their ideal an organization of life in which power was recognized, not for its own sake, but for the good organization of men's lives. Attempts for the realization of such an ideal were at one time a universal monarchy, then a universal Church uniting various States and directing them; then came forth the ideal of representation, then of a Republic, with or without universal suffrage. At the present time it is regarded that this ideal can be realized through an economic organization wherein all the instruments of labor will cease to be private property, and will become the property of the whole nation.

However different be all these ideals, yet, to introduce them into life, power was always postulated—that is, coercive power, which forces men to obey established laws. The same is also postulated now.

It is supposed that the realization of the greatest welfare for all is attained by certain people (according to the Chinese teaching, the most virtuous; according to the European teaching, the anointed, or elected by the people) who, being entrusted with power, will establish and support the organization which will secure the greatest possible safety of the citizens against mutual encroachments on each other's labor and on freedom of life. Not only those who recognize the existing State organization as a necessary condition of human life, but also revolutionists and Socialists, though they regard the existing State organization as subject to alteration, nevertheless recognize power, that is, the right and possibility of some to compel others to obey established laws, as the necessary condition of social order.

Thus it has been from ancient times, and still continues to be. But those who were compelled by force to submit to certain regulations did not always regard these regulations as the best, and therefore often revolted against those in power, deposed them, and in place of the old order established a new one, which, according to their opinion, better ensured the welfare of the people. Yet as those possessed of power always became depraved by this possession, and therefore used their power not so much for the common welfare as for their own personal interests, the new power has always been similar to the old one, and often still more unjust.

Thus it has been when those who had revolted against existing authority overcame it. On the other hand, when victory remained on the side of the existing power, then the latter, triumphant in self-protection, always increased the means of its defense, and became yet more injurious to the liberty of its citizens.

Thus it has always been, both in the past and the present, and there is special instructiveness in the way this has taken place in our European world during the whole of the 19th century. In the first half of this century, revolutions had been for the most part

successful; but the new authorities who replaced the old ones. Napoleon I., Charles X., Napoleon III., did not increase the liberty of the citizens. In the second half, after the year 1848, all attempts at revolution were suppressed by the Governments; and owing to former revolutions and attempted new ones, the Governments entrenched themselves in greater and greater self-defense, and—thanks to the technical inventions of the last century, which have furnished men with hitherto unknown powers over nature and over each other—they have increased their authority, and towards the end of last century have developed it to such a degree that it has become impossible for the people to struggle against it. The Governments have not only seized enormous riches collected from the people, have not only disciplined artfully levied troops, but have also grasped all the spiritual means of influencing the masses, the direction of the Press and of religious development, and, above all, of education. These means have been so organized, and have become so powerful, that since the year 1848 there has been no successful attempt at revolution in Europe.

II

This phenomenon is quite new and is absolutely peculiar to our time. However powerful were Nero, Khengiz-Khan, or Charles the Great, they could not suppress risings on the borders of their domains, and still less could they direct the spiritual activity of their subjects, their education, scientific and moral, and their religious tendencies; whereas now all these means are in the hands of the Governments.

It is not only the Parisian "macadam" which, having replaced the previous stone roadways, renders barricades impossible during revolutions in Paris, but the same kind of "macadam" during the latter half of the 19th century has appeared in all the branches of State government. The secret police, the system of spies, bribery of the Press, railways, telegraphs, telephones, photography, prisons, fortifications, enormous riches, the education of the younger generations, and above all, the army, are in the hands of the Governments.

All is organized in such a way that the most incapable and unintelligent rulers (from the instinctive feeling of self-preservation) can prevent serious preparations for a rising, and can always, without any effort, suppress those weak attempts at open revolt which from time to time are still undertaken by belated revolutionists who, by these attempts, only increase the power of Governments. At present the only means for overcoming Governments lies in this: that the army, composed of the people, having recognized the injustice, cruelty, and injury of the Government towards themselves, should cease to support it. But in this respect

also, the Governments, knowing that their chief power is in the army, have so organized its mobilization and its discipline that no propaganda among the people can snatch the army out of the hands of the Government. No man, whatever his political convictions, who is serving in the army, and has been subjected to that hypnotic breaking-in which is called discipline, can, whilst in the ranks, avoid obeying commands, just as an eye cannot avoid winking when a blow is aimed at it. Boys of the age of twenty, who are enlisted and educated in the false ecclesiastic or materialistic and moreover "patriotic " spirit, cannot refuse to serve, as children who are sent to school cannot refuse to obey. Having entered the service, these youths, whatever their convictions, are—thanks to artful discipline, elaborated during centuries—inevitably transformed in one year into submissive tools in the hands of the authorities. If rare cases occur—one out of ten thousand—of refusals of military service, this is accomplished only by so-called "sectarians" who act thus out of religious convictions unrecognized by the Governments. Therefore, at present, in the European world—if only the Governments desire to retain their power, and they cannot but desire this, because the abolition of power would involve the downfall of the rulers—no serious rising can be organized; and if any thing of the kind be organized it will always be suppressed, and will have no other consequences than the destruction of many light-minded individuals and the increase of governmental power. This may not be seen by revolutionists and Socialists who, following out-lived traditions, are carried away by strife, which for some has become a definite profession; but it cannot fail to be recognized by all those who freely consider historical events.

This phenomenon is quite new, and therefore the activity of those who desire to alter the existing order should conform with this new position of existing powers in the European world.

III

The struggle between the State and the people which has lasted during long ages at first produced the substitution of one power for another, of this one by yet a third, and so on. But in our European world from the middle of last century the power of the existing Governments, thanks to the technical improvements of our time, has been furnished with such means of defense that strife with it has become impossible. In proportion as this power has attained greater and greater degree it has demonstrated more and more its inconsistency: there has become ever more evident that inner contradiction which consists in combination of the idea of a beneficent power and of violence, which constitutes the essence of power. It became obvious that power, which, to be beneficent, should be in the hands of the very best men, was always in the hands of the worst; as the best men, owing to the very nature of power—consisting

in the use of violence towards one's neighbor—could not desire power, and therefore never obtained or retained it.

This contradiction is so self-evident that it would seem everyone must have always seen it. Yet such are the pompous surroundings of power, the fear which it inspires, and the inertia of tradition, that centuries and indeed thousands of years passed before men understood their error. Only in latter days have men begun to understand that notwithstanding the solemnity with which power always drapes itself its essence consists in threatening people with the loss of property, liberty, life, and in realizing these threats; and that, therefore, those who, like kings, emperors, ministers, judges, and others, devote their life to this activity without any object except the desire to retain their advantageous position, not only are not the best, but are always the worst men, and being such, cannot by their power contribute to the welfare of humanity, but on the contrary have always represented, and still represent, one of the principal causes of the social calamities of mankind. Therefore power, which formerly elicited in the people enthusiasm and devotion, at present calls forth among the greater and best portion of mankind not only indifference, but often contempt and hatred. This more enlightened section of mankind now understands that all that pompous show with which power surrounds itself is naught else than the red shirt and velvet trousers of the executioner, which distinguishes him from other convicts because he takes upon himself the most immoral and infamous work—that of executing people.

Power, being conscious of this attitude towards itself continually growing among the people, in our days no longer leans upon the higher foundations of anointed right, popular election, or inborn virtue of the rulers, but rests solely upon coercion. Resting thus merely on coercion, therefore, it still more loses the confidence of the people, and losing this confidence it is more and more compelled to have recourse to the seizure of all the activities of national life, and owing to this seizure it inspires greater and greater dissatisfaction.

IV

Power has become invincible, and rests no longer on the higher national foundations of anointed right, election, or representation, but on violence alone. At the same time the people cease to believe in power and to respect it, and they submit to it only because they cannot do otherwise.

Precisely since the middle of the last century, from the very time when power had simultaneously become invincible and lost its prestige, there begins to appear among the people the teaching that liberty—not that fantastical liberty which is preached by the

adherents of coercion when they affirm that a man who is compelled, under fear of punishment, to fulfill the orders of other men, is free, but that only true liberty, which consists in every man being able to live and act according to his own judgment, to pay or not to pay taxes, to enter or not to enter the military service, to be friendly or inimical to neighboring nations—that such true liberty is incompatible with the power of certain men over others.

According to this teaching, power is not, as was formerly thought, something divine and majestic, neither is it an indispensable condition of social life, but is merely the result of the coarse violence of some men over others. Be the power in the hands of Louis XVI, or the Committee of National Defense, or the Directory, or the Consulate, or Napoleon, or Louis XVIII, or the Sultan, the President, the chief Mandarin, or the first Minister,—wheresoever it be, there will exist the power of certain men over others, and there will not be freedom, but there will be the oppression of one portion of mankind by another. Therefore power must be abolished.

But how to abolish it, and how, when it is abolished, to arrange things so that, without the existence of power, men should not return to the savage state of coarse violence towards each other?

All anarchists—as the preachers of this teaching are called—quite uniformly answer the first question by recognizing that if this power is to be really abolished it must be abolished not by force but by men's consciousness of its uselessness and evil. To the second question, as to how society should be organized without power, anarchists answer variously.

The Englishman Godwin, who lived at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, and the Frenchman Proudhon, who wrote in the middle of the last century, answer the first question by saying that for the abolition of power the consciousness of men is sufficient, that the general welfare (Godwin) and justice (Proudhon) are transgressed by power, and that if the conviction were disseminated among the people that general welfare and justice can be realized only in the absence of power, then power would of itself disappear.

As to the second question, by what means will the order of a new society be ensured without power, both Godwin and Proudhon answer that people who are led by the consciousness of general welfare (according to Godwin) and of justice (according to Proudhon) will instinctively find the most universally rational and just forms of life.

Whereas other anarchists, such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, although they also recognize the consciousness in the masses of the harmfulness of power and its incompatibility with human progress, nevertheless as a means for its abolition regard revolution as possible, and even as necessary, for which revolution they recommend men to prepare. The second question they answer by the assertion that as soon as State organization and property shall be abolished

men will naturally combine in rational, free, and advantageous conditions of life.

To the question as to the means of abolishing power, the German Max Stirner and the American Tucker answer almost in the same way as the others. Both of them believe that if men understood that the personal interest of each individual is a perfectly sufficient and legitimate guide for men's actions, and that power only impedes the full manifestation of this leading factor of human life, then power will perish of itself, both owing to disobedience of it and above all, as Tucker says, to nonparticipation in it. Their answer to the second question is, that men freed from the superstition and necessity of power and merely following their personal interests would of themselves combine into forms of life most adequate and advantageous for each.

All these teachings are perfectly correct in this—that if power is to be abolished, this can be accomplished in no wise by force, as power having abolished power will remain power; but that this abolition of power can be accomplished only by the elucidation in the consciousness of men of the truth that power is useless and harmful, and that men should neither obey it nor participate in it. This truth is incontrovertible: power can be abolished only by the rational consciousness of men. But in what should this consciousness consist? The anarchists believe that this consciousness can be founded upon considerations about common welfare, justice, progress, or the personal interests of men. But not to mention that all these factors are not in mutual agreement, the very definitions of what constitutes general welfare, justice, progress, or personal interest are understood by men in infinitely various ways. Therefore it is impossible to suppose that people who are not agreed among themselves, and who differently understand the bases on which they oppose power, could abolish power so firmly fixed and so ably defended. Moreover, the supposition that considerations about general welfare, justice, or the law of progress can suffice to secure that men, freed from coercion, but having no motive for sacrificing their personal welfare to the general welfare, should combine in just conditions without violating their mutual liberty, is yet more unfounded. The Utilitarian egotistical theory of Max Stirner and Tucker, who affirm that by each following his own personal interest just relations would be introduced between all, is not only arbitrary, but in complete contradiction to what in reality has taken place and is taking place.

So that, whilst correctly recognizing spiritual weapons as the only means of abolishing power, the anarchistic teaching, holding an irreligious materialistic life conception, does not possess this spiritual weapon, and is confined to conjectures and fancies which give the advocates of coercion the possibility of denying its true foundations, owing to the inefficiency of the suggested means of realizing this teaching.

This spiritual weapon is simply the one long ago known to men, which has always destroyed power and always given those who used it

complete and inalienable freedom. This weapon is but this: a devout understanding of life, according to which man regards his earthly existence as only a fragmentary manifestation of the complete life, connecting his own life with infinite life, and, recognizing his highest welfare in the fulfillment of the laws of this infinite life, regards the fulfillment of these laws as more binding upon himself than the fulfillment of any human laws whatsoever.

Only such a religious conception, uniting all men in the same understanding of life, incompatible with subordination to power and participation in it, can truly destroy power.

Only such a life-conception will give men the possibility—without joining in violence—of combining into rational and just forms of life.

Strange to say, only after men have been brought by life itself to the conviction that existing power is invincible, and in our time cannot be overthrown by force, have they come to understand that ridiculously self-evident truth that power and all the evil produced by it are but results of bad life in men, and that therefore, for the abolition of power and the evil it produces, good life on the part of men is necessary.

Men are beginning to understand this. And now they have further to understand that there is only one means for a good life among men: the profession and realization of a religious teaching natural and comprehensible to the majority of mankind.

Only by means of professing and realizing such a religious teaching can men attain the ideal which has now arisen in their consciousness, and towards which they are striving.

All other attempts at the abolition of power and at organizing, without power, a good life among men are only a futile expenditure of effort, and do not bring near the aim towards which men are striving, but only remove them from it.

V

This is what I wish to say to you, sincere people, who, not satisfied with egotistic life, desire to give your strength to the service of your brothers. If you participate, or desire to participate, in governmental activity, and by this means to serve the people, then consider: What is every Government resting on power? And having put this question to yourself, you cannot but see that there is no Government which does not commit, does not prepare to commit, does not rest upon, violence, robbery, murder.

An American writer, little known—Thoreau,—in his essay on why it is men's duty to disobey the Government, relates how he refused to pay the Government of the United States a tax of one dollar, explaining his refusal on the grounds that he does not desire his dollar to participate in the activity of a Government which sanctions the slavery of the negroes. Can not, and should not, the same thing be felt in relation to his Government, I do not say by a Russian, but by a citizen of the most progressive State—the United States of America, with its action in Cuba and the Philippines, with its relation to negroes and the banishment of the Chinese; or of England, with its opium, and Boers; or of France, with its horrors of militarism?

Therefore, a sincere man, wishing to serve his fellow-men, if only he has seriously realized what every Government is, cannot participate in it otherwise than on the strength of the principle that the end justifies the means.

But such an activity has always been harmful for those in whose interests it was undertaken, as well as for those who had recourse to it.

The thing is very simple. You wish, by submitting to the Government and making use of its laws, to snatch from it more liberty and rights for the people. But the liberty and the rights of the people are in inverse ratio to the power of the Government, and in general of the ruling classes. The more liberty and rights the people will have, the less power and advantage will the Government gain from them. Governments know this, and, having all the power in their hands, they readily allow all kinds of Liberal prattle, and even some insignificant Liberal reforms, which justify its power, but they immediately coercively arrest Liberal inclinations which threaten not only the advantages of the rulers but their very existence. So that all your efforts to serve the people through the power of governmental administration or through Parliaments will only lead to this—that you, by your activity, will increase the power of the ruling classes, and will, according to the degree of your sincerity, unconsciously or consciously participate in this power. So it is in regard to those who desire to serve the people by means of the existing State organizations.

If, on the other hand, you belong to the category of sincere people desiring to serve the nation by revolutionary, Socialistic activity, then (not to speak of the insufficiency of aim involved in that material welfare of men towards which you are striving, which never satisfied anyone) consider the means which you possess for its attainment. These means are, in the first place and above all, immoral, containing falsehood, deception, violence, murder; secondly, these means can in no case attain their end. The strength and caution of Governments defending their existence are in our time so great that not only can no ruse, deception, or harsh action overthrow them — they cannot even shake them. All revolutionary attempts only furnish new justification for the violence of Governments, and increase their power.

But even if we admit the impossible—that a revolution in our time could be crowned with success—then, in the first place, why should we expect that, contrary to all which has ever taken place, the power which has overturned another power can increase the liberty of men and become more beneficent than the one it has overthrown? Secondly, if the conjecture, contrary to common sense and experience, were possible, that power having abolished power could give people the freedom necessary to establish those conditions of life which they regard as most advantageous for themselves, then there would be no reason whatever to suppose that people living an egotistical life could establish among themselves better conditions than the previous ones.

Let the Queen of the Dahomeys establish the most Liberal constitution, and let her even realize that nationalization of the instruments of labor which, in the opinion of the Socialists, would save people from all their calamities—it would still be necessary for someone to have power in order that the constitution should work and the instruments of labor should not be seized into private hands. But as long as these people are Dahomeys, with their life-conception, it is evident that—although in another form—the violence of a certain portion of the Dahomeys over the others will be the same as without a constitution and without the nationalization of the instruments of labor. Before realizing the Socialistic organization it would be necessary for the Dahomeys to lose their taste for bloody tyranny. Just the same is necessary for Europeans also.

In order that men may live a common life without oppressing each other, there is necessary, not an organization supported by force, but a moral state in accordance with, which people, from their inner convictions and not by coercion, should act towards others as they desire that others should act towards them. Such people do exist. They exist in religious Christian communities in America, in Russia, in Canada. Such people do indeed, without laws supported by force, live the communal life without oppressing each other.

Thus the rational activity proper to our time for men of our Christian society is only one: the profession and preaching by word and deed of the last and highest religious teaching known to us, of the Christian teaching; not of that Christian teaching which, whilst submitting to the existing order of life, demands of men only the fulfillment of external ritual, or is satisfied with faith in and the preaching of salvation through redemption, but of that vital Christianity the inevitable condition of which is, not only nonparticipation in the action of the Government, but disobedience to its demands, since these demands—from taxes and custom-houses to law courts and armies—are all opposed to this true Christianity. If this be so, then it is evident that it is not to the establishment of new forms that the activity of men desirous of serving their neighbor should be directed, but to the alteration and perfecting of their own characters and those of other people.

Those who act in the other way generally think that the forms of life and the character of life-conception of men may simultaneously improve. But thinking thus, they make the usual mistake of taking the result for the cause and the cause for the result or for an accompanying condition.

The alteration of the character and life-conception of men inevitably brings with it the alteration of those forms in which men had lived, whereas the alteration of the forms of life not only does not contribute to the alteration of the character and life-conception of men, but, more than anything else, obstructs this alteration by directing the attention and activity of men into a false channel. To alter the forms of life, hoping thereby to alter the character and life-conception of men, is like altering in various ways the position of wet wood in a stove, believing that there can be such a position of wet fuel as will cause it to catch fire. Only dry wood will take fire independently of the position in which it is placed.

This error is so obvious that people could not submit to it if there were not a reason which rendered them liable to it. This reason consists in this: that the alteration of the character of men must begin in themselves, and demands much struggle and labor; whereas the alteration of the forms of the life of others is attained easily without inner effort over oneself, and has the appearance of a very important and far-reaching activity.

It is against this error, the source of the greatest evil, that I warn you, men sincerely desirous of serving your neighbor by your lives.

V

"But we cannot live quietly occupying ourselves with the profession and teaching of Christianity when we see around us suffering people. We wish to serve them actively. For this we are ready to surrender our labor, even our lives," say people with more or less sincere indignation.

How do you know, I would answer these people, that you are called to serve men precisely by that method which appears to you the most useful and practical? What you say only shows that you have already decided that we cannot serve mankind by a Christian life, and that true service lies only in political activity, which attracts you.

All politicians think likewise, and they are all in opposition to each other, and therefore certainly cannot all be right. It would be very well if everyone could serve men as he pleased, but such is not the case, and there exists only one means of serving men and

improving their condition. This sole means consists in the profession and realization of a teaching from which flows the inner work of perfecting oneself. The self-perfecting of a true Christian, always living naturally among men and not avoiding them, consists in the establishment of better and even more loving relations between himself and other men. The establishment of loving relations between men cannot but improve their general conditions, although the form of this improvement remains unknown to man.

It is true that in serving through governmental activity, parliamentary or revolutionary, we can determine beforehand the results we wish to attain, and at the same time profit by all the advantages of a pleasant, luxurious life, and obtain a brilliant position, the approval of men, and great fame. If those who participate in such activity have indeed sometimes to suffer, it is such a possibility of suffering as in every strife is redeemed by the possibility of success. In the military activity, suffering and even death are still more possible, and yet only the least moral and the egotistic choose it.

On the other hand, the religious activity, in the first place, does not show us the results which it attains; and secondly, this activity demands the renunciation of external success, and not only does not afford a brilliant position and fame, but brings men to the lowest position from the social point of view – subjects them not only to contempt and condemnation, but to the most cruel sufferings and death.

Thus, in our time of universal conscription, religious activity compels every man who is called to the service of murder to bear all those punishments with which the Government punishes for refusal of military service. Therefore, religious activity is difficult, but it alone gives man the consciousness of true freedom, and the assurance that he is doing that which he should do.

Consequently, this activity alone is truly fruitful, attaining not only its highest object, but also, incidentally and in the most natural and simple way, those results towards which social reformers strive in such artificial ways.

Thus there is only one means of serving men, which consists in oneself living a good life. And not only is this means not visionary –as it is regarded by those to whom it is not advantageous,–but all other means are visionary, by which the leaders of the masses allure them into a false way, distracting them from that method which alone is true.

"But if this be so, when will it come to pass?" say those who wish to see the realization of this ideal as quickly as possible.

It would, of course, be much better if one could do this very quickly, immediately.

It would be very well if one could quickly, immediately, grow a forest. But one cannot do this; one must wait till the seeds shoot, then the leaves, then the branches, and then the trees will grow up.

One can stick branches into the ground, and for a short time they will resemble a wood, but it will be only a resemblance. The same with a rapid establishment of good social order among men. One can arrange a resemblance of good order, as do the Governments, but these imitations only remove the possibility of true order. They remove it, firstly, by cheating men, showing them the image of good order where it does not exist; and, secondly, because these imitations of order are attained only by power, and power depraves men, rulers as well as ruled, and therefore makes true order less possible.

Therefore, attempts at a rapid realization of the ideal not only do not contribute to its actual realization, but more than anything impede it.

So that the solution of the question whether the ideal of mankind—a well-organized society without violence—will be organized soon, or not soon, depends upon whether the rulers of the masses who sincerely wish the people good will soon understand that nothing removes men so much from the realization of their ideal as that which they are now doing—namely, continuing to maintain old superstitions, or denying all religions, and directing the people's activity to the service of the Government, of revolution, of Socialism. If those men who sincerely wish to serve their neighbor were only to understand all the fruitlessness of those means of organizing the welfare of men proposed by the supporters of the State, and by revolutionists—if only they were to understand that the one means by which men can be liberated from their sufferings consists in men themselves ceasing to live an egotistic heathen life, and beginning to live a universal Christian one, not recognizing, as they do now, the possibility and the legality of using violence over one's neighbors, and participating in it for one's personal aims; but if, on the contrary, they were to follow in life the fundamental and highest law of acting towards others as one wishes others to act towards oneself—then very quickly would be overthrown those irrational and cruel forms of life in which we now live, and new ones would develop corresponding to the new consciousness of men.

Think only what enormous and splendid mental powers are now spent in the service of the State — which has outgrown its time—and in its defense from revolution; how much youthful and enthusiastic effort is spent on attempts at revolution, on an impossible struggle with the State; how much is spent on unrealizable Socialistic dreamings.

All this is not only delaying but rendering impossible the realization of the welfare towards which all men are striving. How would it be if all those who are spending their powers so fruitlessly, and often with harm to their neighbors, were to direct them all to that which alone affords the possibility of good social life—to their inner self-perfection?

How many times would one be able to build a new house, out of new solid material, if all those efforts which have been and are now being spent on propping up the old house were used resolutely and conscientiously for the preparation of the material for a new house and the building thereof, which, although obviously it could not at first be as luxurious and convenient for some chosen ones as was the old one, would undoubtedly be more stable, and would afford the complete possibility for those improvements which are necessary, not for the chosen only, but also for all men.

So that all I have here said amounts to the simple, generally comprehensible, and irrefutable truth: that in order that good life should exist among men it is necessary that men should be good.

There is only one way of influencing men towards a good life: namely, to live a good life oneself. Therefore the activity of those who desire to contribute to the establishment of good life among men can and should only consist in efforts towards inner perfection—in the fulfillment of that which is expressed in the Gospel by the words: "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven."