

ON THE RELATION TO THE STATE

by Leo Tolstoy

Translated from the Original Russian and edited by Leo Wiener
Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages at Harvard University

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THREE LETTERS

I.

LETTER TO EUGEN HEINRICH SCHMITT

You write that people absolutely fail to see that the fulfilment of any service to the state is incompatible with Christianity.

Even so, people failed for a long time to see that the indulgences, the Inquisition, slavery, tortures were incompatible with Christianity ; but the time came when this was evident, as the time will come when it will be plain, at first, that Christianity is incompatible with military service (this is beginning even now), and later, that it is incompatible with any service to the state.

As far back as fifty years ago a little-known, but very remarkable American author, Thoreau, not only clearly enunciated this incompatibility in his beautiful article on the duty of a man not to obey the government, but also in practice showed an example of this disobedience. He refused to pay the taxes demanded of him, as he did not wish to be an abettor and accomplice of a state that legalized slavery, and was put in prison for it.

Thoreau refused to pay the taxes to the state. Naturally a man may on the same ground refuse to serve the state, as you beautifully expressed it in your letter to the minister, when you said that you did not consider it compatible with moral dignity to give your labour to an institution which serves as the representative of legalized murder and rapine.

Thoreau, I think, was the first to say so fifty years ago. At that time no one paid any attention to this his refusal and article, - they seemed so strange. The refusal was explained on the ground of eccentricity. Your refusal already provokes discussion and, as always at the enunciation of new truths, double amazement, - wonderment at hearing a man say such strange things, and, after that, wonderment at this : " Why did not I come to think of what

this man speaks,— it is so plain and unquestionable ? "

Truths like these, that a Christian cannot be a military man, that is, a murderer, that he cannot be the servant of an institution which maintains itself by violence and murder, are so unquestionable, simple, and incontestable, that, for people to make them their own, there is no need of reflections, or proof, or eloquence, but only of repetition without cessation, so that the majority of men may hear and understand them.

The truths that a Christian cannot be a participant in murder, or serve and receive a salary, which is forcibly collected from the poor by the leaders in murder, are so simple and so incontestable that any one who hears them cannot help but agree with them ; and if, having heard them, he continues to act contrary to these truths, he does so only because he is in the habit of acting contrary to them, because it is hard for him to break himself of the habit, and because the majority acts just like him, so that a failure to carry out the truth does not deprive him of the respect of the majority of most respected men.

There happens the same as with vegetarianism. " A man can be well and healthy without killing animals for his food ; consequently, if he eats meat, he contributes to the slaughter of animals only for the gratification of his taste. It is immoral to act thus." This is so simple and so incontestable that it is impossible not to agree to it. But because the majority still continue to eat meat, people, upon hearing that reflection, recognize it as just, and immediately add, smiling: " A piece of good beefsteak is a good thing, all the same, and it will give me pleasure to eat it to-day at dinner."

In precisely the same way the officers and officials bear themselves in relation to the proofs as to the incompatibility of Christianity and humanitarianism with military and civil service. " Of course, that is true," such an official will say, " but it is all the same a pleasure to wear a uniform and epaulets which will give us admission anywhere and will gain respect for us, and it is still more agreeable, independently of any chance, with certainty and precision to get your salary on the first of the month. Your reflection is, indeed, correct, but I shall none the less try to get an increase in my salary — and pension." The reflection is admittedly incontestable ; but, in the first place, a man does not himself have to kill an ox, but it is killed already, and a man does not himself have to collect the taxes and kill people, but the taxes are already collected and there is an army ; and, in the second place, the majority of men have not yet heard this reflection and do not know that it is not right to act thus. And so it is permissible as yet not to refuse a savoury beefsteak and a uniform, and decorations which afford so many pleasant things and, above all, a regular, monthly salary : "As for the rest, we will see."

The whole matter rests only on this, that men have not yet heard the discussion which shows them the injustice and criminality of their lives. And so we must keep up the cry, " Carthago delenda est"

Carthage will certainly fall.

I do not say that the state and its power will fall, – that will not happen so soon, for there are in the crowd still too many coarse elements that support it, – but what will be destroyed is the Christian support of the state, that is, the violators will cease to maintain their authority by the sacredness of Christianity. The violators will be violators, and nothing else. And when this shall happen, when they shall not be able to cloak themselves with the pretence of Christianity, the end of violence will be at hand.

Let us try to hasten this end. " Carthago dclenda est." The state is violence, Christianity is humility, non-resistance, love, and so the state cannot be Christian, and a man who wants to be a Christian cannot serve the state. The state cannot be Christian. A Christian cannot serve the state, and so on.

Strange to say, just as you wrote me that letter about the incompatibility of the political activity with Christianity, I wrote a long letter to a lady acquaintance on almost the same theme. I send you this letter.¹ If you deem it necessary, print it.

October 12, 1896.

¹ The next letter.

II.

LETTER –TO THE LIBERALS

I should be very glad with you and your companions, – whose activity I know and esteem highly, – to defend the rights of the Committee of Education and to tight against enemies of popular education ; but I see no way of struggling in the field in which you are working.

I console myself only with this, that I am assiduously at work lighting the same enemies of education, though in a different field.

To judge from the particular question which interests you, I think that in place of the abolished Committee of Education there ought to be established a large number of other educational societies, with the same problems and independently of the government, without asking the government for any permission of the censorship, and allowing the government, if it sees fit, to persecute these educational societies, punish people for them, deport them, and so forth. By doing so the government will only enhance the significance of good books and libraries and will strengthen the movement toward education.

It seems to me that now it is particularly important to do what is good in a quiet and persistent manner, without asking the government, and even consciously evading its participation. The power of the state is based on the ignorance of the people, and the state knows it and so will always fight education. It is time for us to understand this. It is extremely dangerous to give the state a chance, while disseminating darkness, to pretend that it is interested in the education of the masses, as is the case with the so-called educational institutions, which are controlled by it, the public schools, gymnasia, universities, academies, all kinds of committees and associations. The good is good and education is education, only when it is all good and all education, and not when it is adapted to the circulars of the ministers. Above all, I am always sorry to see such precious, unselfish, self-sacrificing forces wasted so unproductively. At times it simply amuses me to see good, clever people waste their strength in fighting the government in the field of those very laws which are arbitrarily written by the government itself.

The matter seems to me to be as follows :

There are some people, to whom we belong, who know that our government is very bad, and who fight it. Ever since the time of Liadishchev and the Decembrists, two methods of struggling have been in vogue, – one, that of Stenka Bazin, Pugachdv, the Decembrists, the revolutionists of the sixties, the actors of the first of March, and others : a second, which is preached and applied by you, – the method of the “moderators,” which consists in fighting on a legal basis, without violence, by a gradual acquisition of rights. Both methods have assiduously been applied for more than half a century, so far as my memory goes, and the condition is getting worse and worse ; if the condition is getting better, this is not due to this or that activity, but in spite of the harmfulness of these activities (for different reasons, of which I shall speak later), and the force against which the struggle is carried on, is growing more powerful, more potent, and more insolent. The last flashes of self-government, the County Council, the courts, the committees of education, and everything else, are all being abolished.

Now, since so much time has passed in the vain employment of these means, we can, it seems, see clearly that neither method is any good, and why not. To me at least, who always, had contempt for our government, but never had recourse to either method to fight it with, the mistakes of the two methods are obvious.

The first method is no good, because, even if it should be possible to change the existing order by means of violence, nothing guarantees that the established new order would be permanent, and that the enemies of this new order would not triumph under favourable conditions and with the aid of the same violence, as often happened in France and wherever there were revolutions. And so the new order of things, which is established through violence, would have to be constantly supported by the same violence, that is, by lawlessness, and, in consequence of it, would inevitably and very

quickly be ruined, like the one whose place it took. But in case of failure, as has always happened in Bussia, all the cases of revolutionary violence, from Pugachdv to the first of March, have only strengthened the order of things against which they have fought, transferring to the camp of the conservatives and retrogrades the enormous number of indecisive people who stood in the middle and did not belong to either camp. And so I think that, being guided by experience and by reflection, I may say boldly that this method is not only immoral, but also irrational and ineffective.

Still less effective and rational, in my opinion, is the second method. It is ineffective and irrational, because having in hand the whole power (the army, the administration, the church, the schools, the police), and composing those very so-called laws, on the basis of which the liberals want to fight with it, the government knows full well what is dangerous for itself, and will never permit the people who submit to it and who act under its guidance to do anything which might subvert its power. Thus, for example, in the present case, the government, which in Russia (as elsewhere) is based on the ignorance of the people, will never allow the people to get any real education. It gives permission for the establishment of so-called educational institutions, which are controlled by it, – public schools, gymnasia, universities, academies, all kinds of committees and associations, and censored publications, so long as these institutions and publications serve its purposes, that is, stultify the people, or at least do not interfere with their stultification ; but at every attempt made by these institutions or publications to undermine that on which the power of the government is based, that is, the ignorance of the people, the government, without giving any account to any one for doing so and not otherwise, most quietly pronounces its veto, reorganizes and closes the establishments or institutions, and prohibits the publications. And so, as becomes clear from reflection and from experience, such a supposed gradual conquest of rights is only a self-deception, which is very advantageous for the government and so is even encouraged by it.

But this activity is not only irrational and ineffective, but also harmful. It is harmful, in the first place, because enlightened, good, honest men, by entering into the ranks of the government, give it a moral authority, which it did not have without them. If the whole government consisted of nothing but coarse violators, selfish men, and flatterers, who form its pith, it could not exist. Only the participation of enlightened and honest men in the government gives it that moral prestige which it has. In this consists one harm of the activity of the liberals, who take part in the government or compromise with it. In the second place, such an activity is harmful, because, for the possibility of its manifestation, these same enlightened, honest men, by admitting compromises, slowly get used to the idea that for a good purpose it is permissible a little to depart from truth both in words and acts. It is permissible, for example, without acknowledging the existing religion, to execute its rites, to take an oath, to deliver false addresses that are contrary

to human dignity, if that is necessary for the success of the cause ; it is right to enter military service, to take part in the County Council, which has no rights, to serve as a teacher, as a professor, teaching, not what one thinks necessary, but what is prescribed by the government, even by the County Council chief ; it is right to submit to the demands and regulations of the government, which are contrary to one's conscience, and publish newspapers and periodicals, passing over in silence what ought to be said, and printing what one is commanded to print. By making these compromises, the limits of which it is impossible to foresee, enlightened, honourable men, who alone could form a barrier against the government in its encroachment upon men's liberty, by imperceptibly departing more and more from the demands of their conscience, fall into a condition of complete dependence on the government, before they get a chance to look around : they receive their salaries, their rewards from it, and, by continuing to imagine that they are carrying out liberal ideas, become submissive servants and supporters of the very order against which they have been struggling.

It is true, there are also very good and sincere men in this camp, who do not succumb to the enticements of the government and remain free from bribery, salary, and position. These men generally get caught in the meshes of the net which the government throws about them, and they struggle in this net, as you now do with your committees, whirling about in one spot ; or they get excited and pass over to the camp of the revolutionists ; or they commit suicide, or take to drinking, or in despair throw everything up and, what happens most frequently, betake themselves to literature, where they submit to the demands of the censorship and express only what is permitted, and by this very concealment of what is most important introduce the most perverse ideas, which are most desirable to the government, to the public, imagining all the time that with their writing, which gives them the means of existence, they are serving society.

Thus reflection and experience show me that both methods for struggling against the government, which have been in vogue, are not only not effective, but equally contribute to the strengthening of the power and the arbitrariness of the government.

What, then, is to be done ? Evidently not that which in the course of seventy years has proved to be fruitless and has attained the opposite results. What, then, is to be done ? 'The same that is done by those thanks to whose activity there has been accomplished all that forward movement toward the light, the good, which has been accomplished since the world has existed. It is this that ought to be done. Now what is it ?

It is the simple, calm, truthful fulfilment of what one considers to be good and proper, quite independently of the government, of whether that pleases the government or not, – in other words, a defence of one's rights, not as a member of the Committee of Education, or as an aiderman, or landowner, or merchant, or even as

a member of parliament, but the defence of one's rights as a rational and free man, and their defence, not as one defends the rights of County Councils and committees, with concessions and compromises, but without any concessions or compromises, as indeed the moral human dignity cannot be defended in any other way.

In order successfully to defend a fortress, it is necessary to burn all the houses of the suburb and to leave only what is fortified and what we will not surrender under any condition. The same is true here : it is necessary at first to concede what we can surrender, and to keep only what is not to be surrendered. Only by fortifying ourselves on what is unsurrenderable, are we able to conquer everything which we need, il is uuc,

of parliament, or even of the County Council, or of a committee are greater than those of a simple man, and, by making use of these rights, it seems that very much may be accomplished ; but the trouble is, that, to acquire the rights of the County Council, the parliament, the committee, it is necessary to renounce part of one's own rights as a man. And having renounced a part of one's own rights as a man, no fulcrum is left, and it is impossible either to gain any new rights or retain those already possessed. To pull others out of the mire, a man must himself stand on dry land, and if he, for greater convenience in the work, goes down into the mire, he does not pull any one else out, and himself sticks fast. It may be very well and useful to pass an eight-hour day in parliament or a liberal programme for school libraries in some committee ; but if a member of parliament, to do this, must raise his hand and lie in public, and lie in pronouncing an oath and expressing in words a respect for what he does not respect ; or if we, to carry into execution the most liberal programmes, are obliged to attend Te Deunis, swear, put on uniforms, write lying and flattering documents, and make similar speeches, and so forth, we, by doing all these things, renounce our human dignity and lose much more than we gain, and, by striving after the attainment of one definite end (as a rule not even this end is attained), deprive ourselves of the possibility of attaining other most important ends. The government can be restrained and counteracted only by men who have something which they will not give up for anything, under any conditions. To have the power for counteraction it is necessary to have a fulcrum, and the government knows this very well, and is particularly concerned about coaxing that which does not yield, – the human dignity, – out of men. When this is coaxed out of them the government calmly does what it needs to, knowing that it will no longer meet with any real opposition. A man who consents to swear in public, pronouncing the unbecoming and false words of the oath, or submissively in his uniform to wait for several hours to be received by a minister, or to inscribe himself in the "guard of protection" during the coronation, or for decency's sake to go through the ceremony of the communion, or to ask the chiefs of the censorship in advance whether certain ideas may be expressed or not, and so forth, is no longer a danger to the government.

Alexander II. said that the liberals were not dangerous to him,

because he knew that they could all be bought with honours, if not with money.

Men who take part in the government or who work under its guidance may, by pretending that they are fighting, deceive themselves and their like ; but those who struggle against them know incontestably from the opposition which they offer that they are not in earnest, but are only pretending. And this our government knows in relation to the liberals, and it is constantly making experiments as to how much real opposition there is, and, upon having ascertained to what extent it is absent for the government's purposes, it proceeds to do its work with the full assurance that anything may be done with these men.

The government of Alexander III. knew this very well, and, knowing this, calmly abolished everything of which the liberals had been so proud, imagining that they had done it all : it limited the trial by jury ; abolished the office of the justice of the peace ; abolished the university rights; changed the system of instruction in the gymnasia ; renewed the school of cadets, and even the governmental sale of liquor ; established the County Council chiefs ; legalized the use of the rod ; almost abolished the County Council ; gave the governors uncontrolled power ; encouraged public executions ; enforced administrative deportations and confinements in prisons, and the execution of political prisoners ; introduced new religious persecutions; carried the stultification of the masses by means of savage superstitions to the utmost limits; legalized murder in duels ; established anarchy in the form of the guard of protection, with capital punishment, as a normal order of things ; and in the enforcement of all these measures it did not meet with any opposition, except the protest of one honourable woman, who boldly told the government what she considered to be truth. Though the liberals softly said to one another that they did not like it all, they continued to take part in the courts, and in the County Councils, and in the universities, and in the service, and in the press. In the press they threw out hints at what they were allowed to hint at, and passed in silence what they were not allowed to mention; but they continued to print what they were commanded to print. Thus every reader, who received the liberal newspapers and periodicals but was not initiated in what was quietly talked of in the editor's office, read the uncommented exposition and condemnation of the most cruel and senseless measures, subservient and fulsome addresses meant for the authors of these measures, and frequently even laudations of them. Thus all the sad activity of the government of Alexander III., which destroyed all the good that had begun to enter into life under Alexander II., and which endeavoured to bring Russia back to the barbarism of the times of the beginning of the present century, – all that sad activity of gibbets, rods, persecutions, and the stultification of the masses, – became the subject of a mad eulogy of Alexander HI., which was printed in all the liberal newspapers and periodicals, and of his glorification as a great man, as a model of human dignity.

The same has been continued during the new reign. The young man who

took the place of the former Tsar, and who had no idea of life, was assured by the men who stand by the power and who profit by it, that to govern one hundred millions it was necessary to do the same that his father had done, that is, that no one ought to be asked what was to be done, and that he ought to do anything that occurred to him or that he was counselled to do by any of the flatterers near his person. And imagining that the unlimited autocracy is a sacred principle of the life of the Russian nation, this young man begins his reign by this, that, instead of asking the representatives of the Russian nation to help him with their advice in his government, of which he, who was educated in the regiments of the guard, understands nothing and cannot understand anything, he boldly and indecently shouts at the representatives of the Russian nation, who come to congratulate him, and calls the timid expression of the desire of some of them to inform the authorities of their wants " senseless reveries."

Well ? Was Russian society provoked, and did the enlightened and honourable men – the liberals – express their indignation and contempt, and at least refrain from extolling such a government and from taking part in it and encouraging it ? Not at all. From that time there began a race to extol the father and the son, who emulates him, and not a single protesting voice is raised, except in one anonymous letter, which cautiously expresses the disapproval of the act of the young Tsar, and on all sides the Tsar is offered base, fulsome addresses, for some reason, all kinds of images, which are of no use to any one and serve only as a subject of idolatry for coarse men. A coronation, horrible in its insipidity and frantic waste of money, is arranged ; from disregard for the masses and from the insolence of the rulers there occur terrible calamities in which thousands lose their lives and upon which the guilty persons look as upon a small overcasting of the solemnity, that need not be interrupted on account of them ; an exhibition is established, on which millions are wasted and which is of no use except to those who arranged it; with unheard-of boldness they invent in the chancery of the Synod new, most stupid means for the stultification of the masses, – the relics of a man, of whom no one had ever heard anything ; the severity of the censorship is increased ; the persecutions for religion's sake are enforced ; the guard of protection, that is, legalized lawlessness, is continued, and the condition gets worse and worse.

I think that all that would not exist, if those enlightened and honourable men who are now busy with their liberal activity on the basis of legality in the County Councils, committees, censored literature, and so forth, did not direct their energy to deceiving the government in the very forms which are established by the government, and somehow to compelling it to act to its detriment and ruin,¹ but directed it to the defence of their personal human rights, under no condition taking part in the government or in any affairs which are connected with it.

" It pleases you to substitute County Council chiefs with rods in the place of justices of the peace, – that is your business, but we

will not go to court to your County Council chiefs, nor will we ourselves accept such an office ; it pleases you to make the trial by jury nothing but a formality, – that is your business, but we will not become judges, nor lawyers, nor jurors : it pleases you, under the guise of a guard of protection, to establish lawlessness, – that is your business, but we will not take part in it and will frankly call the guard of protection a species of lawlessness, and capital punishment without trial simple murder; it pleases you to establish classical gymnasia with military exercises and religious instruction, or schools

1 It sometimes amuses me to think how foolishly men busy themselves with such an impossible matter, as though it were possible to cut off an animal's foot, without the animal's noticing it. – Author's Note.

of cadets, – that is your business, but we will not be teachers in them and will not send our children to them, but will educate our children as we think best ; it pleases you to reduce the County Council to nothing, – we will not take part in it ; you forbid the publication of what displeases you, – you may catch and punish the printers and burn down the printing-offices, but you cannot keep us from talking and writing, and that we will do ; you command us to swear allegiance to the Tsar, – we will not do so, because that is stupid, deceitful, and base ; you command us to serve in the army, – we will not do so, because we consider mass murder to be an act which is as contrary to conscience as single murder, and, above all, the promise to kill whomsoever our chief will command us to kill the basest act which a man can commit ; you profess a religion which is a thousand years behind the times, with the Iberian Virgin, with its relics, and with its coronations, – that is your business, but we not only do not recognize it as being a religion, but call it the worst kind of idolatry, and try to free people from it/’

What can the government do against such an activity ? They can deport or imprison a man for preparing a bomb or even printing a proclamation to the labouring people, and they can transfer a committee of education from one ministry to another, or prorogue a parliament ; but what can a government do with a man who will not lie in public, by raising his hand, or does not want to send his children to an institution which he considers to be bad, or does not want to learn how to kill men, or does not want to take part in idolatry, or does not want to take part in coronations, meetings, and addresses, or says and writes what he thinks and feels ? By persecuting such a man, the government causes universal sympathy to be directed toward such a man, makes a martyr of him, and undermines those foundations on which it holds itself, because. by doing so, it violates the human rights, instead of protecting them.

Let all those good, enlightened, and honourable men, whose energy is now wasted to their own detriment and to the detriment of their cause in a revolutionary, socialistic, and liberal activity, begin to act thus, and there would form itself a nucleus of honest, enlightened, and moral men, welded together by one thought and one

sentiment, and this nucleus would immediately be joined by the whole wavering mass of average men, and there would appear that one force which vanquishes governments,— that public opinion, which demands the freedom of the word, the freedom of conscience, justice, and humaneness ; as soon as public opinion would be formed, it would not only become impossible to close a committee of education, but all those inhuman institutions, in the form of the guard of protection, the secret police, the censorship, Schliisselburg, the Synod, with which the revolutionists and liberals are struggling now, would naturally be destroyed.

Thus, two methods have been tried in the struggle with the government, both of them failures, and now a third, the last, is left ; it has not yet been tried, but in my opinion it cannot help but be successful. This method, briefly expressed, consists in this, that all the enlightened and honest people should try to be as good as possible, — I do not even mean good in every respect, but only in one, namely, in the observation of one elementary virtue, — to be honest, not to lie, and to act and speak in such a way that the motives which prompt you to act may be comprehensible to your seven-year-old son, who loves you ; act in such a way that your son may not say : “ Why, papa, did you then say so, and now do and say something quite different ?” This method seems to be very weak, and yet I am convinced that it is this one method that has advanced humanity ever since its existence. It was only because there were such straightforward, truthful, manly men, who did not yield to any one in the matter of their human dignity, that all those beneficent changes which men now enjoy — from the abolition of torture and slavery to the freedom of speech and of conscience — were accomplished. And this could not be otherwise, because what is demanded by the conscience, the highest presentiment of the truth which is accessible to man, is always and in all relations at a given moment the most fruitful and the most necessary activity for humanity.

But I must explain myself : the statement that for the attainment of those ends toward which the revolutionists and the liberals alike are striving, the most effective means is an activity which is in conformity with one’s conscience, does not mean that for the attainment of these ends it is possible to begin by living in conformity with one’s conscience. It is impossible to begin on purpose to live in conformity with one’s conscience, in order to attain any external ends.

A man can live in conformity with his conscience only in consequence of some firm and clear religious convictions. When there are such firm and clear religious convictions, the beneficent consequences from them in the external life will inevitably come. And so the essence of what I wanted to say consists in this, that it is unprofitable for good, sincere men to waste the forces of their mind and soul on the attainment of trifling, practical ends, as in all kinds of struggles of nationality, parties, liberal programmes, so long as there has not been established any clear and firm religious world-conception, that is, the consciousness of the meaning of their

life and its destiny. I think that all the efforts of the soul and the reason of good people who wish to serve men, ought to be directed upon this. When this shall be, all the rest will happen.

Pardon me for having written you at such a length : perhaps you do not need this, but I have for a long time been wishing to say something in regard to this question. I even began a long article on the subject, but I doubt whether I shall be able to finish it before my death, and so I wanted to say what I could. Forgive me, if I have erred in anything.

August 31, 1836.

III.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY CHRONICLE

Ever since the «appearance of my book, The Kingdom, of God Is Within You, and of the article, Christianity and Patriotism, I frequently have had occasion to read in articles and in letters retorts, I shall not say to my thoughts, but to their misinterpretations. This is sometimes done consciously, and sometimes unconsciously, only through a sheer misunderstanding of the spirit of the Christian teaching.

“All that is very well,” I am told ; “despotism, capital punishment, the armament of the whole of Europe, the oppressed condition of the labourers, and the wars are all great calamities, and you are right when you condemn the existing order, but how can we get along without a government ? What right have we, the men with a limited comprehension and intellect, because it seems better to us, to destroy that existing order of things, by means of which our ancestors attained the present high degree of civilization and all its benefits ? While destroying the government we ought to put something else in its place, if not, how can we risk all those terrible calamities, which must inevitably assail us, if the government is destroyed ? ”

But the point is, that the Christian teaching, in its true sense, has never proposed to destroy anything, nor has it proposed any new order, which is to take the place of the older one. The Christian teaching differs from all the other religious and social doctrines in this very thing, that it gives the good to men, not by means of common laws for the lives of all men, but by the elucidation for every individual man of the meaning of his life, by showing him what the evil and what the true good of his life consists in. And this meaning of life, which is revealed to man by the Christian teaching, is so clear, so convincing, and so unquestionable, that as soon as a man has come to understand it and so cognizes what the evil and the good of his life consists in, he can in no way consciously do that in which he sees the evil of his life, and cannot fail to do that in which he sees its true good, just as water cannot help but run down,

and a plant tend toward the light.

But the meaning of life, as revealed to man by Christianity, consists in doing the will of Him, from whom we have come into this world and to whom we shall go, when we leave it. Thus the evil of our life lies only in the departure from this will, and the good lies only in the fulfilment of the demands of this will, which are so simple and so clear that it is as impossible to miss understanding them as it is absurd to misinterpret them. If you cannot do unto another what you wish that he should do unto you, at least do not do unto another what you do not wish that another should do unto you : if you do not wish to be compelled to work in a factory or in mines for ten hours at a time; if you do not wish your children to be hungry, cold, ignorant; if you do not wish your land, on which you can support yourself, to be taken from you ; if you do not wish to be locked up in a prison and hanged, because through old age, temptation, or ignorance you have committed an illegal act ; if you do not wish to be wounded and killed in war, – do not do the same to others.

All this is so simple, so clear, so incontestable, that a small child cannot help but understand it, and no sophist can overthrow it.

Let us imagine that a labourer, who is entirely in the power of his master, is put to some comprehensible work, which he likes. Suddenly this labourer, who is in the full power of the master, is approached by men who, he knows, are in the same dependence on the master as he, and who are charged with a similar definite work as he, – and these men, who themselves have not fulfilled the work entrusted to them, demand of the labourer that he shall do the very reverse of what is clearly and unquestionably, without any exception, prescribed to him by his master. What can any sensible labourer reply to such a demand ?

But this comparison is far from expressing what must be the feelings of a Christian, who is approached with the demands that he shall take part in oppression, in the seizure of land, in capital punishments, wars, and so forth, demands which are made upon us by the governmental authorities, because, no matter how impressive the commands of the master may have been for the labourer, they will never compare with that unquestionable knowledge of every man who is uncorrupted by false teachings, that he must not do unto others what he does not wish to have done unto himself, and that he, therefore, must not take part in acts of violence, in levying for the army, in capital punishments, in the murder of his neighbour, which is demanded of him by his government. Thus, the question for a Christian is not, as it is unwittingly and sometimes consciously put by the advocates of the government, whether a man has the right to destroy the existing order and put a new one in its place, – a Christian does not even think of the general order, leaving this to be managed by God, being firmly convinced that God has implanted His law in our minds and hearts, not for disorder, but for order, and that nothing but what is good will come from following the

unquestionable law of God, which is revealed to us ; the question for any Christian, or for any man in general, is not, how to arrange matters in an external or new way (no one of us is obliged to solve this question),— what is subject to the solution of every one of us, not at will, but inevitably, is the question as to how I am to act in the choice which presents itself to me all the time : must I, contrary to my conscience, take part in the government, which recognizes the right to the ownership in land in the case of those men who do not work upon it, which collects the taxes from the poor, in order to give them to the rich, which deports and sends to hard labour and hangs erring men, drives soldiers to slaughter, corrupts the masses with opium and whiskey, and so forth ; or must I, in accordance with my conscience, refuse to take part in the government, whose acts are contrary to my conscience? But what will happen, what the government will be as the result of this or that act of mine, I do not know ; not that I do not wish to know it, but I cannot know it.

In this does the force of the Christian teaching consist, that it transfers the questions of life from the field of eternal guesses and doubts to the field of undoubted knowledge.

But I shall be told : " We, too, do not deny the necessity of changing the existing order, and also wish to mend it, — not by refusing to take part in the government, in the courts, in the army, not by destroying the government, but on the contrary, by taking part in the government, by acquiring liberty and rights, by choosing as representatives the true friends of the people and the enemies of war and of every violence."

All that would be very nice, if the contribution to the improvement of the forms of the government coincided with the purpose of human life. Unfortunately it not only fails to coincide with it, but even contradicts it. If human life is limited by this world, its purpose is much nearer than a gradual amelioration of government,— it is in the personal good ; but if life does not end with this world it is much farther, — in the fulfilment of God's will. If it is in my personal good, and life ends here, what business have I with the future slow improved order of the state, which will be accomplished sometime and somewhere, in all probability when I am no longer alive ? But if my life is immortal, the purpose of the improved order of the English, German, Russian, or any other state in the twentieth century is too little for me, and absolutely fails to satisfy the demands of my immortal soul. What may be an adequate purpose for my life is either my immediate good, which by no means coincides with the state activity of taxes, courts, wars, or the eternal salvation of my soul, which is attained only by the fulfilment of God's will, and this will just as little coincides with the demands of violence, of capital punishments, of wars, of the existing order.

And so I repeat : the question, not only for a Christian, but for every man of our time as well, is not, what social life will be more secure, the one which is defended with rifles, cannon, gibbets, or

the one which will not be defended in this manner. There is but one question for each man, and this is such as we cannot get away from :
" Do you, a rational and good being, who have appeared to-day and may disappear to-morrow, wish, if you recognize God, to act contrary to law and to His will, knowing that you may any moment return to Him, or, if you do not recognize God, do you wish to act contrary to those qualities of reason and of love, by which alone you may be guided in life, knowing that if you are mistaken you will never be able to correct your mistake ? "

And the answer to this question for those men for whom it has arisen can only be: "No, I cannot, I will not."

I am told, "This is the destruction of government and the annihilation of the existing order." But if the fulfilment of God's will destroys the existing order, is not that an undoubted proof that the existing order is contrary to God's will and ought to be destroyed ?

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THE END.