

## VI

Two thousand years ago John the Baptist and then Jesus said to men: The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; (μετανοεῖτε) bethink yourselves and believe in the Gospel (Mark i. 15); and if you do not bethink yourselves you will all perish (Luke xiii. 5).

But men did not listen to them, and the destruction they foretold is already near at hand. And we men of our time cannot but see it. We are already perishing, and, therefore, we cannot leave unheeded that--old in time, but for us new--means of salvation. We cannot but see that, besides all the other calamities which flow from our bad and irrational life, military preparations alone and the wars inevitably growing from them must infallibly destroy us. We cannot but see that all the means of escape invented by men from these evils are found and must be found to be ineffectual, and that the disastrous position of the nations arming themselves against each other cannot but go on advancing continually. And therefore the words of Jesus refer to us and our time more than to any time or to any one.

Jesus said, "Bethink yourselves"--i.e. "Let every man interrupt the work he has begun and ask himself: Who am I? From whence have I appeared, and in what consists my destiny? And having answered these questions, according to the answer decide whether that which thou doest is in conformity with thy destiny." And every man of our world and time, that

is, being acquainted with the essence of the Christian teaching, needs only for a minute to interrupt his activity, to forget the capacity in which he is regarded by men, be it of Emperor, soldier, minister, or journalist, and seriously ask himself who he is and what is his destiny--in order to begin to doubt the utility, lawfulness, and reasonableness of his actions. "Before I am Emperor, soldier, minister, or journalist," must say to himself every man of our time and of the Christian world, "before any of these, I am a man--i.e. an organic being sent by the Higher Will into a universe infinite in time and space, in order, after staying in it for an instant, to die--i.e. to disappear from it. And, therefore, all those personal, social, and even universal human aims which I may place before myself and which are placed before me by men are all insignificant, owing to the shortness of my life as well as to the infiniteness of the life of the universe, and should be subordinated to that higher aim for the attainment of which I am sent into the world. This ultimate aim, owing to my limitations, is inaccessible to me, but it does exist (as there must be a purpose in all that exists), and my business is that of being its instrument--i.e. my destiny, my vocation, is that of being a workman of God, of fulfilling His work." And having understood this destiny, every man of our world and time, from Emperor to soldier, cannot but regard differently those duties which he has taken upon himself or other men have imposed upon him.

"Before I was crowned, recognized as Emperor," must the Emperor say to himself: "before I undertook to fulfil the duties of the head of the State, I, by the very fact that I live, have promised to fulfil that

which is demanded of me by the Higher Will that sent me into life. These demands I not only know, but feel in my heart. They consist, as it is expressed in the Christian law, which I profess, in that I should submit to the will of God, and fulfil that which it requires of me, that I should love my neighbor, serve him, and act towards him as I would wish others to act towards me. Am I doing this?--ruling men, prescribing violence, executions, and, the most dreadful of all,--wars. Men tell me that I ought to do this. But God says that I ought to do something quite different. And, therefore, however much I may be told that, as the head of the State, I must direct acts of violence, the levying of taxes, executions and, above all, war, that is, the slaughter of one's neighbor, I do not wish to and cannot do these things."

So must say to himself the soldier, who is taught that he must kill men, and the minister, who deemed it his duty to prepare for war, and the journalist who incited to war, and every man, who puts to himself the question, Who is he, what is his destination in life? And the moment the head of the State will cease to direct war, the soldier to fight, the minister to prepare means for war, the journalist to incite thereto--then, without any new institutions, adaptations, balance of power, tribunals, there will of itself be destroyed that hopeless position in which men have placed themselves, not only in relation to war, but also to all other calamities which they themselves inflict upon themselves.

So that, however strange this may appear, the most effective and certain

deliverance of men from all the calamities which they inflict upon themselves and from the most dreadful of all--war--is attainable, not by any external general measures, but merely by that simple appeal to the consciousness of each separate man which, nineteen hundred years ago, was proposed by Jesus--that every man bethink himself, and ask himself, who is he, why he lives, and what he should and should not do.