

IX

But "How are we to act now, immediately among ourselves, in Russia, at this moment, when our foes have already attacked us, are killing our people, and threatening us; what should be the action," I shall be asked, "of a Russian soldier, officer, general, Tsar, private individual? Are we, forsooth, to allow our enemies to ruin our possessions, to seize the productions of our labors, to carry away prisoners, or kill our men? What are we to do now that this thing has begun?"

But before the work of war was commenced, by whomsoever it was commenced--every awakened man must answer--before all else the work of my life was commenced. And the work of my life has nothing in common with recognition of the rights of the Chinese, Japanese, or Russians to Port Arthur. The work of my life consists in fulfilling the will of Him who sent me into this life. This will is known to me. This will is that I should love my neighbor and serve him. Then why should I, following temporary, casual, irrational, and cruel demands, deviate from the known eternal and changeless law of all my life? If there be a God, He will not ask me when I die (which may happen at any moment) whether I retained Chi-nam-po with its timber stores, or Port Arthur, or even that conglomeration which is called the Russian Empire, which He did not confide to my care; but He will ask me what I have done with that life which He put at my disposal;--did I use it for the purpose for which it was predestined, and under the conditions for fulfilling which it was

intrusted to me? Have I fulfilled His law?

So that to this question as to what is to be done now, when war is commenced, for me, a man who understands his destiny, whatever position I may occupy, there can be no other answer than this, whatever be my circumstances, whether the war be commenced or not, whether thousands of Russians or Japanese be killed, whether not only Port Arthur be taken, but St. Petersburg and Moscow--I cannot act otherwise than as God demands of me, and that therefore I as a man can neither directly nor indirectly, neither by directing, nor by helping, nor by inciting to it, participate in war; I cannot, I do not wish to, and I will not. What will happen immediately or soon, from my ceasing to do that which is contrary to the will of God, I do not and cannot know; but I believe that from the fulfilment of the will of God there can follow nothing but that which is good for me and for all men.

You speak with horror about what might happen if we Russians at this moment ceased to fight, and surrendered to the Japanese what they desire from us. But if it be true that the salvation of mankind from brutalization and self-destruction lies only in the establishment amongst men of that true religion which demands that we should love our neighbor and serve him (with which it is impossible to disagree), then every war, every hour of war, and my participation in it, only renders more difficult and distant the realization of this only possible salvation.

So that, even if one places oneself on the unstable point of view of

defining actions according to their presumed consequences--even then the surrender to the Japanese by the Russians of all which the former desire of us, besides the unquestionable advantage of the cessation of ruin and slaughter, would be an approach to the only means of the salvation of mankind from destruction; whereas the continuance of the war, however it may end, will be a postponement of that only means of salvation.

"Yet even if this be so," it is replied, "wars can cease only when all men, or the majority, will refuse to participate in them. But the refusal of one man, whether he be Tsar or soldier, would only, unnecessarily, and without the slightest profit to any one, ruin his life. If the Russian Tsar were now to throw up the war, he would be dethroned, perhaps killed, in order to get rid of him; if an ordinary man were to refuse military service, he would be sent to a penal battalion and perhaps shot. Why, then, without the slightest use should one throw away one's life, which may be profitable to society?" is the common question of those who do not think of the destination of their life and therefore do not understand it.

But this is not what is said and felt by any man who understands the destination of his life--i.e. by any religious man. Such a man is guided in his activity not by the presumed consequences of his action, but by the consciousness of the destination of his life. A factory workman goes to his factory and in it accomplishes the work which is allotted him without considering what will be the consequences of his labor. In the same way a soldier acts, carrying out the will of his

commanders. So acts a religious man in fulfilling the work prescribed to him by God, without arguing as to what precisely will come of that work. Therefore for a religious man there is no question as to whether many or few men act as he does, or of what may happen to him if he does that which he should do. He knows that besides life and death nothing can happen, and that life and death are in the hands of God whom he obeys.

A religious man acts thus and not otherwise, not because he desires to act thus, nor because it is advantageous to himself or to other men, but because, believing that his life is in the hands of God, he cannot act otherwise.

In this lies the distinction of the activity of religious men; and therefore it is that the salvation of men from the calamities which they inflict upon themselves can be realized only in that degree in which they are guided in their lives, not by advantage nor arguments, but by religious consciousness.