

## CHAPTER IX.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF LIFE WILL EMANCIPATE MEN FROM THE MISERIES OF OUR PAGAN LIFE.

The External Life of Christian Peoples Remains Pagan Though they are Penetrated by Christian Consciousness--The Way Out of this Contradiction is by the Acceptance of the Christian Theory of Life--Only Through Christianity is Every Man Free, and Emancipated of All Human Authority--This Emancipation can be Effected by no Change in External Conditions of Life, but Only by a Change in the Conception of Life--The Christian Ideal of Life Requires Renunciation of all Violence, and in Emancipating the Man who Accepts it, Emancipates the Whole World from All External Authorities--The Way Out of the Present Apparently Hopeless Position is for Every Man who is Capable of Assimilating the Christian Conception of Life, to Accept it and Live in Accordance with it--But Men Consider this Way too Slow, and Look for Deliverance Through Changes in Material Conditions of Life Aided by Government--That Will Lead to No Improvement, as it is simply Increasing the Evil under which Men are Suffering--A Striking Instance of this is the Submission to Compulsory Military Service, which it would be More Advantageous for Every Man to Refuse than to Submit to--The Emancipation of Men Can Only be Brought About by each Individual Emancipating Himself, and the Examples of this Self-emancipation which are already Appearing Threaten the Destruction of Governmental Authority--Refusal to Comply with the Unchristian Demands of Government Undermines the Authority of the State and

Emancipates Men--And therefore Cases of such Non-compliance are Regarded with more Dread by State Authorities than any Conspiracies or Acts of Violence--Examples of Non-compliance in Russia, in Regard to Oath of Allegiance, Payment of Taxes, Passports, Police Duties, and Military Service--Examples of such Non-compliance in other States--Governments do not Know how to Treat Men who Refuse to Comply with their Demands on Christian Grounds--Such People, without Striking a Blow, Undermine the very Basis of Government from Within--To Punish them is Equivalent to Openly Renouncing Christianity, and Assisting in Diffusing the Very Principle by which these Men justify their Non-compliance--So Governments are in a Helpless Position--Men who Maintain the Uselessness of Personal Independence, only Retard the Dissolution of the Present State Organization Based on Force.

The position of the Christian peoples in our days has remained just as cruel as it was in the times of paganism. In many respects, especially in the oppression of the masses, it has become even more cruel than it was in the days of paganism.

But between the condition of men in ancient times and their condition in our days there is just the difference that we see in the world of vegetation between the last days of autumn and the first days of spring. In the autumn the external lifelessness in nature corresponds with its inward condition of death, while in the spring the external lifelessness is in sharp contrast with the

internal state of reviving and passing into new forms of life.

In the same way the similarity between the ancient heathen life and the life of to-day is merely external: the inward condition of men in the times of heathenism was absolutely different from their inward condition at the present time.

Then the outward condition of cruelty and of slavery was in complete harmony with the inner conscience of men, and every step in advance intensified this harmony; now the outward condition of cruelty and of slavery is completely contradictory to the Christian consciousness of men, and every step in advance only intensifies this contradiction.

Humanity is passing through seemingly unnecessary, fruitless agonies. It is passing through something like the throes of birth. Everything is ready for the new life, but still the new life does not come.

There seems no way out of the position. And there would be none, except that a man (and thereby all men) is gifted with the power of forming a different, higher theory of life, which at once frees him from all the bonds by which he seems indissolubly fettered.

And such a theory is the Christian view of life made known to mankind eighteen hundred years ago.

A man need only make this theory of life his own, for the fetters which seemed so indissolubly forged upon him to drop off of themselves, and for him to feel himself absolutely free, just as a bird would feel itself free in a fenced-in place directly it tools to its wings.

People talk about the liberty of the Christian Church, about giving or not giving freedom to Christians. Underlying all these ideas and expressions there is some strange misconception. Freedom cannot be bestowed on or taken from a Christian or Christians. Freedom is an inalienable possession of the Christian.

If we talk of bestowing freedom on Christians or withholding it from them, we are obviously talking not of real Christians but of people who only call themselves Christians. A Christian cannot fail to be free, because the attainment of the aim he sets before himself cannot be prevented or even hindered by anyone or anything.

Let a man only understand his life as Christianity teaches him to understand it, let him understand, that is, that his life belongs not to him--not to his own individuality, nor to his family, nor to the state--but to him who has sent him into the world, and let him once understand that he must therefore fulfill not the law of

his own individuality, nor his family, nor of the state, but the infinite law of him from whom he has come; and he will not only feel himself absolutely free from every human power, but will even cease to regard such power as at all able to hamper anyone.

Let a man but realize that the aim of his life is the fulfillment of God's law, and that law will replace all other laws for him, and he will give it his sole allegiance, so that by that very allegiance every human law will lose all binding and controlling power in his eyes.

The Christian is independent of every human authority by the fact that he regards the divine law of love, implanted in the soul of every man, and brought before his consciousness by Christ, as the sole guide of his life and other men's also.

The Christian may be subjected to external violence, he may be deprived of bodily freedom, he may be in bondage to his passions (he who commits sin is the slave of sin), but he cannot be in bondage in the sense of being forced by any danger or by any threat of external harm to perform an act which is against his conscience.

He cannot be compelled to do this, because the deprivations and sufferings which form such a powerful weapon against men of the state conception of life, have not the least power to compel him.

Deprivations and sufferings take from them the happiness for which they live; but far from disturbing the happiness of the Christian, which consists in the consciousness of fulfilling the will of God, they may even intensify it, when they are inflicted on him for fulfilling his will.

And therefore the Christian, who is subject only to the inner divine law, not only cannot carry out the enactments of the external law, when they are not in agreement with the divine law of love which he acknowledges (as is usually the case with state obligations), he cannot even recognize the duty of obedience to anyone or anything whatever, he cannot recognize the duty of what is called allegiance.

For a Christian the oath of allegiance to any government whatever --the very act which is regarded as the foundation of the existence of a state--is a direct renunciation of Christianity.

For the man who promises unconditional obedience in the future to laws, made or to be made, by that very promise is in the most, positive manner renouncing Christianity, which means obeying in every circumstance of life only the divine law of love he recognizes within him.

Under the pagan conception of life it was possible to carry out the will of the temporal authorities, without infringing the law

of God expressed in circumcisions, Sabbaths, fixed times of prayer, abstention from certain kinds of food, and so on. The one law was not opposed to the other. But that is just the distinction between the Christian religion and heathen religion. Christianity does not require of a man certain definite negative acts, but puts him in a new, different relation to men, from which may result the most diverse acts, which cannot be defined beforehand. And therefore the Christian not only cannot promise to obey the will of any other man, without knowing what will be required by that will; he not only cannot obey the changing laws of man, but he cannot even promise to do anything definite at a certain time, or to abstain from doing anything for a certain time. For he cannot know what at any time will be required of him by that Christian law of love, obedience to which constitutes the meaning of life for him. The Christian, in promising unconditional fulfillment of the laws of men in the future, would show plainly by that promise that the inner law of God does not constitute for him the sole law of his life.

For a Christian to promise obedience to men, or the laws of men, is just as though a workman bound to one employer should also promise to carry out every order that might be given him by outsiders. One cannot serve two masters.

The Christian is independent of human authority, because he acknowledges God's authority alone. His law, revealed by Christ,

he recognizes in himself, and voluntarily obeys it.

And this independence is gained, not by means of strife, not by the destruction of existing forms of life, but only by a change in the interpretation of life. This independence results first from the Christian recognizing the law of love, revealed to him by his teacher, as perfectly sufficient for all human relations, and therefore he regards every use of force as unnecessary and unlawful; and secondly, from the fact that those deprivations and sufferings, or threats of deprivations and sufferings (which reduce the man of the social conception of life to the necessity of obeying) to the Christian from his different conception of life, present themselves merely as the inevitable conditions of existence. And these conditions, without striving against them by force, he patiently endures, like sickness, hunger, and every other hardship, but they cannot serve him as a guide for his actions. The only guide for the Christian's actions is to be found in the divine principle living within him, which cannot be checked or governed by anything.

The Christian acts according to the words of the prophecy applied to his teacher: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." (Matt. xii. 19, 20.)



The Christian will not dispute with anyone, nor attack anyone, nor use violence against anyone. On the contrary, he will bear violence without opposing it. But by this very attitude to violence, he will not only himself be free, but will free the whole world from all external power.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If there were any doubt of Christianity being the truth, the perfect liberty, that nothing can curtail, which a man experiences directly he makes the Christian theory of life his own, would be an unmistakable proof of its truth.

Men in their present condition are like a swarm of bees hanging in a cluster to a branch. The position of the bees on the branch is temporary, and must inevitably be changed. They must start off and find themselves a habitation. Each of the bees knows this, and desires to change her own and the others' position, but no one of them can do it till the rest of them do it. They cannot all start off at once, because one hangs on to another and hinders her from separating from the swarm, and therefore they all continue to hang there. It would seem that the bees could never escape from their position, just as it seems that worldly men, caught in the toils of the state conception of life, can never escape. And there would be no escape for the bees, if each of them were not a living, separate creature, endowed with wings of its own.

Similarly there would be no escape for men, if each were not a

living being endowed with the faculty of entering into the Christian conception of life.

If every bee who could fly, did not try to fly, the others, too, would never be stirred, and the swarm would never change its position. And if the man who has mastered the Christian conception of life would not, without waiting for other people, begin to live in accordance with this conception, mankind would never change its position. But only let one bee spread her wings, start off, and fly away, and after her another, and another, and the clinging, inert cluster would become a freely flying swarm of bees. Just in the same way, only let one man look at life as Christianity teaches him to look at it, and after him let another and another do the same, and the enchanted circle of existence in the state conception of life, from which there seemed no escape, will be broken through.

But men think that to set all men free by this means is too slow a process, that they must find some other means by which they could set all men free at once. It is just as though the bees who want to start and fly away should consider it too long a process to wait for all the swarm to start one by one; and should think they ought to find some means by which it would not be necessary for every separate bee to spread her wings and fly off, but by which the whole swarm could fly at once where it wanted to. But that is not possible; till a first, a second, a third, a

hundredth bee spreads her wings and flies off of her own accord, the swarm will not fly off and will not begin its new life. Till every individual man makes the Christian conception of life his own, and begins to live in accord with it, there can be no solution of the problem of human life, and no establishment of a new form of life.

One of the most striking phenomena of our times is precisely this advocacy of slavery, which is promulgated among the masses, not by governments, in whom it is inevitable, but by men who, in advocating socialistic theories, regard themselves as the champions of freedom.

These people advance the opinion that the amelioration of life, the bringing of the facts of life into harmony with the conscience, will come, not as the result of the personal efforts of individual men, but of itself as the result of a certain possible reconstruction of society effected in some way or other. The idea is promulgated that men ought not to walk on their own legs where they want and ought to go, but that a kind of floor under their feet will be moved somehow, so that on it they can reach where they ought to go without moving their own legs. And, therefore, all their efforts ought to be directed, not to going so far as their strength allows in the direction they ought to go, but to standing still and constructing such a floor.

In the sphere of political economy a theory is propounded which amounts to saying that the worse things are the better they are; that the greater the accumulation of capital, and therefore the oppression of the workman, the nearer the day of emancipation, and, therefore, every personal effort on the part of a man to free himself from the oppression of capital is useless. In the sphere of government it is maintained that the greater the power of the government, which, according to this theory, ought to intervene in every department of private life in which it has not yet intervened, the better it will be, and that therefore we ought to invoke the interference of government in private life. In politics and international questions it is maintained that the improvement of the means of destruction, the multiplication of armaments, will lead to the necessity of making war by means of congresses, arbitration, and so on. And, marvelous to say, so great is the dullness of men, that they believe in these theories, in spite of the fact that the whole course of life, every step they take, shows how unworthy they are of belief.

The people are suffering from oppression, and to deliver them from this oppression they are advised to frame general measures for the improvement of their position, which measures are to be intrusted to the authorities, and themselves to continue to yield obedience to the authorities. And obviously all that results from this is only greater power in the hands of the authorities, and greater oppression resulting from it.

Not one of the errors of men carries them so far away from the aim toward which they are struggling as this very one. They do all kinds of different things for the attainment of their aim, but not the one simple obvious thing which is within reach of everyone. They devise the subtlest means for changing the position which is irksome to them, but not that simplest means, that everyone should refrain from doing what leads to that position.

I have been told a story of a gallant police officer, who came to a village where the peasants were in insurrection and the military had been called out, and he undertook to pacify the insurrection in the spirit of Nicholas I., by his personal influence alone. He ordered some loads of rods to be brought, and collecting all the peasants together into a barn, he went in with them, locking the door after him. To begin with, he so terrified the peasants by his loud threats that, reduced to submission by him, they set to work to flog one another at his command. And so they flogged one another until a simpleton was found who would not allow himself to be flogged, and shouted to his companions not to flog one another. Only then the fogging ceased, and the police officer made his escape. Well, this simpleton's advice would never be followed by men of the state conception of life, who continue to flog one another, and teach people that this very act of self-castigation is the last word of human wisdom.

Indeed, can one imagine a more striking instance of men flogging themselves than the submissiveness with which men of our times will perform the very duties required of them to keep them in slavery, especially the duty of military service? We see people enslaving themselves, suffering from this slavery, and believing that it must be so, that it does not matter, and will not hinder the emancipation of men, which is being prepared somewhere, somehow, in spite of the ever-increasing growth of slavery.

In fact, take any man of the present time whatever (I don't mean a true Christian, but an average man of the present day), educated or uneducated, believing or unbelieving, rich or poor, married or unmarried. Such a man lives working at his work, or enjoying his amusements, spending the fruits of his labors on himself or on those near to him, and, like everyone, hating every kind of restriction and deprivation, dissension and suffering. Such a man is going his way peaceably, when suddenly people come and say to him: First, promise and swear to us that you will slavishly obey us in everything we dictate to you, and will consider absolutely good and authoritative everything we plan, decide, and call law. Secondly, hand over a part of the fruits of your labors for us to dispose of--we will use the money to keep you in slavery, and to hinder you from forcibly opposing our orders. Thirdly, elect others, or be yourself elected, to take a pretended share in the government, knowing all the while that the government will proceed quite without regard to the foolish speeches you, and those like

you, may utter, and knowing that its proceedings will be according to our will, the will of those who have the army in their hands. Fourthly, come at a certain time to the law courts and take your share in those senseless cruelties which we perpetrate on sinners, and those whom we have corrupted, in the shape of penal servitude, exile, solitary confinement, and death. And fifthly and lastly, more than all this, in spite of the fact that you maybe on the friendliest terms with people of other nations, be ready, directly we order you to do so, to regard those whom we indicate to you as your enemies; and be ready to assist, either in person or by proxy, in devastation, plunder, and murder of their men, women, children, and aged alike--possibly your own kinsmen or relations--if that is necessary to us.

One would expect that every man of the present day who has a grain of sense left, might reply to such requirements, "But why should I do all this?" One would think every right-minded man must say in amazement: "Why should I promise to yield obedience to everything that has been decreed first by Salisbury, then by Gladstone; one day by Boulanger, and another by Parliament; one day by Peter III., the next by Catherine, and the day after by Pougachef; one day by a mad king of Bavaria, another by William? Why should I promise to obey them, knowing them to be wicked or foolish people, or else not knowing them at all? Why am I to hand over the fruits of my labors to them in the shape of taxes, knowing that the money will be spent on the support of officials, prisons, churches,

armies, on things that are harmful, and on my own enslavement? Why should I punish myself? Why should I go wasting my time and hoodwinking myself, giving to miscreant evildoers a semblance of legality, by taking part in elections, and pretending that I am taking part in the government, when I know very well that the real control of the government is in the hands of those who have got hold of the army? Why should I go to the law courts to take part in the trial and punishment of men because they have sinned, knowing, if I am a Christian, that the law of vengeance is replaced by the law of love, and, if I am an educated man, that punishments do not reform, but only deprave those on whom they are inflicted? And why, most of all, am I to consider as enemies the people of a neighboring nation, with whom I have hitherto lived and with whom I wish to live in love and harmony, and to kill and rob them, or to bring them to misery, simply in order that the keys of the temple at Jerusalem may be in the hands of one archbishop and not another, that one German and not another may be prince in Bulgaria, or that the English rather than the American merchants may capture seals?

And why, most of all, should I take part in person or hire others to murder my own brothers and kinsmen? Why should I flog myself? It is altogether unnecessary for me; it is hurtful to me, and from every point of view it is immoral, base, and vile. So why should I do this? If you tell me that if I do it not I shall receive some injury from someone, then, in the first place, I cannot



anticipate from anyone an injury so great as the injury you bring on me if I obey you; and secondly, it is perfectly clear to me that if we our own selves do not flog ourselves, no one will flog us.

As for the government--that means the tzars, ministers, and officials with pens in their hands, who cannot force us into doing anything, as that officer of police compelled the peasants; the men who will drag us to the law court, to prison, and to execution, are not tzars or officials with pens in their hands, but the very people who are in the same position as we are. And it is just as unprofitable and harmful and unpleasant to them to be flogged as to me, and therefore there is every likelihood that if I open their eyes they not only would not treat me with violence, but would do just as I am doing.

Thirdly, even if it should come to pass that I had to suffer for it, even then it would be better for me to be exiled or sent to prison for standing up for common sense and right--which, if not to-day, at least within a very short time, must be triumphant--than to suffer for folly and wrong which must come to an end directly. And therefore, even in that case, it is better to run the risk of their banishing me, shutting me up in prison, or executing me, than of my living all my life in bondage, through my own fault, to wicked men. Better is this than the possibility of being destroyed by victorious enemies, and being stupidly tortured and killed by them, in fighting for a cannon, or a piece of

land of no use to anyone, or for a senseless rag called a banner.

I don't want to flog myself and I won't do it. I have no reason to do it. Do it yourselves, if you want it done; but I won't do it.

One would have thought that not religious or moral feeling alone, but the simplest common sense and foresight should impel every man of the present day to answer and to act in that way. But not so. Men of the state conception of life are of the opinion that to act in that way is not necessary, and is even prejudicial to the attainment of their object, the emancipation of men from slavery. They hold that we must continue, like the police officer's peasants, to flog one another, consoling ourselves with the reflection that we are talking away in the assemblies and meetings, founding trades unions, marching through the streets on the 1st of May, getting up conspiracies, and stealthily teasing the government that is flogging us, and that through all this it will be brought to pass that, by enslaving ourselves in closer and closer bondage, we shall very soon be free.

Nothing hinders the emancipation of men from slavery so much as this amazing error. Instead of every man directing his energies to freeing himself, to transforming his conception of life, people seek for an external united method of gaining freedom, and continue to rivet their chains faster and faster.

It is much as if men were to maintain that to make up a fire there was no need to kindle any of the coals, but that all that was necessary was to arrange the coals in a certain order. Yet the fact that the freedom of all men will be brought about only through the freedom of individual persons, becomes more and more clear as time goes on. The freedom of individual men, in the name of the Christian conception of life, from state domination, which was formerly an exceptional and unnoticed phenomenon, has of late acquired threatening significance for state authorities.

If in a former age, in the Roman times, it happened that a Christian confessed his religion and refused to take part in sacrifices, and to worship the emperors or the gods; or in the Middle Ages a Christian refused to worship images, or to acknowledge the authority of the Pope--these cases were in the first place a matter of chance. A man might be placed under the necessity of confessing his faith, or he might live all his life without being placed under this necessity. But now all men, without exception, are subjected to this trial of their faith.

Every man of the present day is under the necessity of taking part in the cruelties of pagan life, or of refusing all participation in them. And secondly, in those days cases of refusal to worship the gods or the images or the Pope were not incidents that had any material bearing on the state. Whether men worshiped or did not worship the gods or the images or the Pope, the state remained just as powerful. But now cases of refusing to comply with the

unchristian demands of the government are striking at the very root of state authority, because the whole authority of the state is based on the compliance with these unchristian demands.

The sovereign powers of the world have in the course of time been brought into a position in which, for their own preservation, they must require from all men actions which cannot be performed by men who profess true Christianity.

And therefore in our days every profession of true Christianity, by any individual man, strikes at the most essential power of the state, and inevitably leads the way for the emancipation of all.

What importance, one might think, can one attach to such an incident as some dozens of crazy fellows, as people will call them, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the government, refusing to pay taxes, to take part in law proceedings or in military service?

These people are punished and exiled to a distance, and life goes on in its old way. One might think there was no importance in such incidents; but yet, it is just those incidents, more than anything else, that will undermine the power of the state and prepare the way for the freedom of men. These are the individual bees, who are beginning to separate from the swarm, and are flying near it, waiting till the whole swarm can no longer be prevented

from starting off after them. And the governments know this, and fear such incidents more than all the socialists, communists, and anarchists, and their plots and dynamite bombs.

A new reign is beginning. According to the universal rule and established order it is required that all the subjects should take the oath of allegiance to the new government. There is a general decree to that effect, and all are summoned to the council-houses to take the oath. All at once one man in Perm, another in Tula, a third in Moscow, and a fourth in Kalouga declare that they will not take the oath, and though there is no communication between them, they all explain their refusal on the same grounds--namely, that swearing is forbidden by the law of Christ, and that even if swearing had not been forbidden, they could not, in the spirit of the law of Christ, promise to perform the evil actions required of them in the oath, such as informing against all such as may act against the interests of the government, or defending their government with firearms or attacking its enemies. They are brought before rural police officers, district police captains, priests, and governors. They are admonished, questioned, threatened, and punished; but they adhere to their resolution, and do not take the oath. And among the millions of those who did take the oath, those dozens go on living who did not take the oath. And they are questioned:

"What, didn't you take the oath?"

"No, I didn't take the oath."

"And what happened--nothing?"

"Nothing."

The subjects of a state are all bound to pay taxes. And everyone pays taxes, till suddenly one man in Kharkov, another in Tver, and a third in Samara refuse to pay taxes--all, as though in collusion, saying the same thing. One says he will only pay when they tell him what object the money taken from him will be spent on. "If it is for good deeds," he says, "he will give it of his own accord, and more even than is required of him. If for evil deeds, then he will give nothing voluntarily, because by the law of Christ, whose follower he is, he cannot take part in evil deeds." The others, too, say the same in other words, and will not voluntarily pay the taxes.

Those who have anything to be taken have their property taken from them by force; as for those who have nothing, they are left alone.

"What, didn't you pay the tax?"

"No, I didn't pay it."

"And what happened-nothing?"

"Nothing."

There is the institution of passports. Everyone moving from his place of residence is bound to carry one, and to pay a duty on it. Suddenly people are to be found in various places declaring that to carry a passport is not necessary, that one ought not to recognize one's dependence on a state which exists by means of force; and these people do not carry passports, or pay the duty on them. And again, it's impossible to force those people by any means to do what is required. They send them to jail, and let them out again, and these people live without passports.

All peasants are bound to fill certain police offices--that of village constable, and of watchman, and so on. Suddenly in Kharkov a peasant refuses to perform this duty, justifying his refusal on the ground that by the law of Christ, of which he is a follower, he cannot put any man in fetters, lock him up, or drag him from place to place. The same declaration is made by a peasant in Tver, another in Tambov. These peasants are abused, beaten, shut up in prison, but they stick to their resolution and don't fill these offices against their convictions. And at last they cease to appoint them as constables. And again nothing happens.

All citizens are obliged to take a share in law proceedings in the character of jurymen. Suddenly the most different people--mechanics, professors, tradesmen, peasants, servants, as though by agreement refuse to fill this office, and not on the grounds allowed as sufficient by law, but because any process at law is, according to their views, unchristian. They fine these people, trying not to let them have an opportunity of explaining their motives in public, and replace them by others. And again nothing can be done.

All young men of twenty-one years of age are obliged to draw lots for service in the army. All at once one young man in Moscow, another in Tver, a third in Kharkov, and a fourth in Kiev present themselves before the authorities, and, as though by previous agreement, declare that they will not take the oath, they will not serve because they are Christians. I will give the details of one of the first cases, since they have become more frequent, which I happen to know about [footnote: All the details of this case, as well as those preceding it, are authentic]. The same treatment has been repeated in every other case. A young man of fair education refuses in the Moscow Townhall to take the oath. No attention is paid to what he says, and it is requested that he should pronounce the words of the oath like the rest. He declines, quoting a particular passage of the Gospel in which swearing is forbidden. No attention is paid to his arguments, and he is again requested to comply with the order, but he does not comply with it. Then it is supposed that he is a sectary and



therefore does not understand Christianity in the right sense, that is to say, not in the sense in which the priests in the pay of the government understand it. And the young man is conducted under escort to the priests, that they may bring him to reason. The priests begin to reason with him, but their efforts in Christ's name to persuade him to renounce Christ obviously have no influence on him; he is pronounced incorrigible and sent back again to the army. He persists in not taking the oath and openly refuses to perform any military duties. It is a case that has not been provided for by the laws. To overlook such a refusal to comply with the demands of the authorities is out of the question, but to put such a case on a par with simple breach of discipline is also out of the question.

After deliberation among themselves, the military authorities decide to get rid of the troublesome young man, to consider him as a revolutionist, and they dispatch him under escort to the committee of the secret police. The police authorities and gendarmes cross-question him, but nothing that he says can be brought under the head of any of the misdemeanors which come under their jurisdiction. And there is no possibility of accusing him either of revolutionary acts or revolutionary plotting, since he declares that he does not wish to attack anything, but, on the contrary, is opposed to any use of force, and, far from plotting in secret, he seeks every opportunity of saying and doing all that he says and does in the most open manner. And the gendarmes,

though they are bound by no hard-and-fast rules, still find no ground for a criminal charge in the young man, and, like the clergy, they send him back to the army. Again the authorities deliberate together, and decide to accept him though he has not taken the oath, and to enrol him among the soldiers. They put him into the uniform, enrol him, and send him under guard to the place where the army is quartered. There the chief officer of the division which he enters again expects the young man to perform his military duties, and again he refuses to obey, and in the presence of other soldiers explains the reason of his refusal, saying that he as a Christian cannot voluntarily prepare himself to commit murder, which is forbidden by the law of Moses.

This incident occurs in a provincial town. The case awakens the interest, and even the sympathy, not only of outsiders, but even of the officers. And the chief officers consequently do not decide to punish this refusal of obedience with disciplinary measures. To save appearances, though, they shut the young man up in prison, and write to the highest military authorities to inquire what they are to do. To refuse to serve in the army, in which the Tzar himself serves, and which enjoys the blessing of the Church, seems insanity from the official point of view.

Consequently they write from Petersburg that, since the young man must be out of his mind, they must not use any severe treatment with him, but must send him to a lunatic asylum, that his mental condition may be inquired into and be scientifically treated.

They send him to the asylum in the hope that he will remain there, like another young man, who refused ten years ago at Tver to serve in the army, and who was tortured in the asylum till he submitted. But even this step does not rid the military authorities of the inconvenient man. The doctors examine him, interest themselves warmly in his case, and naturally finding in him no symptoms of mental disease, send him back to the army. There they receive him, and making believe to have forgotten his refusal, and his motives for it, they again request him to go to drill, and again in the presence of the other soldiers he refuses and explains the reason of his refusal. The affair continues to attract more and more attention, both among the soldiers and the inhabitants of the town. Again they write to Petersburg, and thence comes the decree to transfer the young man to some division of the army stationed on the frontier, in some place where the army is under martial law, where he can be shot for refusing to obey, and where the matter can proceed without attracting observation, seeing that there are few Russians and Christians in such a distant part, but the majority are foreigners and Mohammedans. This is accordingly done. They transfer him to a division stationed on the Zacasian border, and in company with convicts send him to a chief officer who is notorious for his harshness and severity.

All this time, through all these changes from place to place, the young man is roughly treated, kept in cold, hunger, and filth, and life is made burdensome to him generally. But all these

sufferings do not compel him to change his resolution. On the Zacasian border, where he is again requested to go on guard fully armed, he again declines to obey. He does not refuse to go and stand near the haystacks where they place him, but refuses to take his arms, declaring that he will not use violence in any case against anyone. All this takes place in the presence of the other soldiers. To let such a refusal pass unpunished is impossible, and the young man is put on his trial for breach of discipline. The trial takes place, and he is sentenced to confinement in the military prison for two years. He is again transferred, in company with convicts, by *étape*, to Caucasus, and there he is shut up in prison and falls under the irresponsible power of the jailer. There he is persecuted for a year and a half, but he does not for all that alter his decision not to bear arms, and he explains why he will not do this to everyone with whom he is brought in contact. At the end of the second year they set him free, before the end of his term of imprisonment, reckoning it contrary to law to keep him in prison after his time of military service was over, and only too glad to get rid of him as soon as possible.

Other men in various parts of Russia behave, as though by agreement, precisely in the same way as this young man, and in all these cases the government has adopted the same timorous, undecided, and secretive course of action. Some of these men are sent to the lunatic asylum, some are enrolled as clerks and

transferred to Siberia, some are sent to work in the forests, some are sent to prison, some are fined. And at this very time some men of this kind are in prison, not charged with their real offense--that is, denying the lawfulness of the action of the government, but for non-fulfillment of special obligations imposed by government. Thus an officer of reserve, who did not report his change of residence, and justified this on the ground that he would not serve in the army any longer, was fined thirty rubles for non-compliance with the orders of the superior authority. This fine he also declined voluntarily to pay. In the same way some peasants and soldiers who have refused to be drilled and to bear arms have been placed under arrest on a charge of breach of discipline and insolence.

And cases of refusing to comply with the demands of government when they are opposed to Christianity, and especially cases of refusing to serve in the army, are occurring of late not in Russia only, but everywhere. Thus I happen to know that in Servia men of the so-called sect of Nazarenes steadily refuse to serve in the army, and the Austrian Government has been carrying on a fruitless contest with them for years, punishing them with imprisonment. In the year 1885 there were 130 such cases. I know that in Switzerland in the year 1890 there were men in prison in the castle of Chillon for declining to serve in the army, whose resolution was not shaken by their punishment. There have been such cases in Sweden, and the men who refused obedience were sent to prison in exactly the same way, and the government studiously concealed

these cases from the people. There have been similar cases also in Prussia. I know of the case of a sub-lieutenant of the Guards, who in 1891 declared to the authorities in Berlin that he would not, as a Christian, continue to serve, and in spite of all admonitions, threats, and punishments he stuck to his resolution. In the south of France a society has arisen of late bearing the name of the Henschists (these facts are taken from the PEACE HERALD, July, 1891), the members of which refuse to enter military service on the grounds of their Christian principles. At first they were enrolled in the ambulance corps, but now, as their numbers increase, they are subjected to punishment for non-compliance, but they still refuse to bear arms just the same.

The socialists, the communists, the anarchists, with their bombs and riots and revolutions, are not nearly so much dreaded by governments as these disconnected individuals coming from different parts, and all justifying their non-compliance on the grounds of the same religion, which is known to all the world. Every government knows by what means and in what manner to defend itself from revolutionists, and has resources for doing so, and therefore does not dread these external foes. But what are governments to do against men who show the uselessness, superfluousness, and perniciousness of all governments, and who do not contend against them, but simply do not need them and do without them, and therefore are unwilling to take any part in them? The revolutionists say: The form of government is bad in this respect and that respect; we must overturn it and substitute

this or that form of government. The Christian says: I know nothing about the form of government, I don't know whether it is good or bad, and I don't want to overturn it precisely because I don't know whether it is good or bad, but for the very same reason I don't want to support it either. And I not only don't want to, but I can't, because what it demands of me is against my conscience.

All state obligations are against the conscience of a Christian--the oath of allegiance, taxes, law proceedings, and military service. And the whole power of the government rests on these very obligations.

Revolutionary enemies attack the government from without. Christianity does not attack it at all, but, from within, it destroys all the foundations on which government rests.

Among the Russian people, especially since the age of Peter I., the protest of Christianity against the government has never ceased, and the social organization has been such that men emigrate in communes to Turkey, to China, and to uninhabited lands, and not only feel no need of state aid, but always regard the state as a useless burden, only to be endured as a misfortune, whether it happens to be Turkish, Russian, or Chinese. And so, too, among the Russian people more and more frequent examples have of late appeared of conscious Christian freedom from subjection to the state. And these examples are the more alarming for the government from the fact that these non-compliant persons often

belong not to the so-called lower uneducated classes, but are men of fair or good education; and also from the fact that they do not in these days justify their position by any mystic and exceptional views, as in former times, do not associate themselves with any superstitious or fanatic rites, like the sects who practice self-immolation by fire, or the wandering pilgrims, but put their refusal on the very simplest and clearest grounds, comprehensible to all, and recognized as true by all.

Thus they refuse the voluntary payment of taxes, because taxes are spent on deeds of violence--on the pay of men of violence--soldiers, on the construction of prisons, fortresses, and cannons. They as Christians regard it as sinful and immoral to have any hand in such deeds.

Those who refuse to take the oath of allegiance refuse because to promise obedience to authorities, that is, to men who are given to deeds of violence, is contrary to the sense of Christ's teaching. They refuse to take the oath in the law courts, because oaths are directly forbidden by the Gospel. They refuse to perform police duties, because in the performance of these duties they must use force against their brothers and ill treat them, and a Christian cannot do that. They refuse to take part in trials at law, because they consider every appeal to law is fulfilling the law of vengeance, which is inconsistent with the Christian law of forgiveness and love. They refuse to take any part in military preparations and in the army, because they cannot be executioners, and they are unwilling to prepare themselves to be so.



The motives in all these cases are so excellent that, however despotic governments may be, they could hardly punish them openly. To punish men for refusing to act against their conscience the government must renounce all claim to good sense and benevolence. And they assure people that they only rule in the name of good sense and benevolence.

What are governments to do against such people?

Governments can of course flog to death or execute or keep in perpetual imprisonment all enemies who want to overturn them by violence, they can lavish gold on that section of the people who are ready to destroy their enemies. But what can they do against men who, without wishing to overturn or destroy anything, desire simply for their part to do nothing against the law of Christ, and who, therefore, refuse to perform the commonest state requirements, which are, therefore, the most indispensable to the maintenance of the state?

If they had been revolutionists, advocating and practicing violence and murder, their suppression would have been an easy matter; some of them could have been bought over, some could have been duped, some could have been overawed, and these who could not be bought over, duped, or overawed would have been treated as criminals, enemies of society, would have been executed or

imprisoned, and the crowd would have approved of the action of the government. If they had been fanatics, professing some peculiar belief, it might have been possible, in disproving the superstitious errors mixed in with their religion, to attack also the truth they advocate. But what is to be done with men who profess no revolutionary ideas nor any peculiar religious dogmas, but merely because they are unwilling to do evil to any man, refuse to take the oath, to pay taxes, to take part in law proceedings, to serve in the army, to fulfill, in fact, any of the obligations upon which the whole fabric of a state rests? What is to be done with such people? To buy them over with bribes is impossible; the very risks to which they voluntarily expose themselves show that they are incorruptible. To dupe them into believing that this is their duty to God is also impossible, since their refusal is based on the clear, unmistakable law of God, recognized even by those who are trying to compel men to act against it. To terrify them by threats is still less possible, because the deprivations and sufferings to which they are subjected only strengthen their desire to follow the faith by which they are commanded: to obey God rather than men, and not to fear those who can destroy the body, but to fear him who can destroy body and soul. To kill them or keep them in perpetual imprisonment is also impossible. These men have friends, and a past; their way of thinking and acting is well known; they are known by everyone for good, gentle, peaceable people, and they cannot be regarded as criminals who must be removed for the safety

of society. And to put men to death who are regarded as good men is to provoke others to champion them and justify their refusal. And it is only necessary to explain the reasons of their refusal to make clear to everyone that these reasons have the same force for all other men, and that they all ought to have done the same long ago. These cases put the ruling powers into a desperate position. They see that the prophecy of Christianity is coming to pass, that it is loosening the fetters of those in chains, and setting free them that are in bondage, and that this must inevitably be the end of all oppressors. The ruling authorities see this, they know that their hours are numbered, and they can do nothing. All that they can do to save themselves is only deferring the hour of their downfall. And this they do, but their position is none the less desperate.

It is like the position of a conqueror who is trying to save a town which has been set on fire by its own inhabitants. Directly he puts out the conflagration in one place, it is alight in two other places; directly he gives in to the fire and cuts off what is on fire from a large building, the building itself is alight at both ends. These separate fires may be few, but they are burning with a flame which, however small a spark it starts from, never ceases till it has set the whole ablaze.

Thus it is that the ruling authorities are in such a defenseless position before men who advocate Christianity, that but little is

necessary to overthrow this sovereign power which seems so powerful, and has held such an exalted position for so many centuries. And yet social reformers are busy promulgating the idea that it is not necessary and is even pernicious and immoral for every man separately to work out his own freedom. As though, while one set of men have been at work a long while turning a river into a new channel, and had dug out a complete water-course and had only to open the floodgates for the water to rush in and do the rest, another set of men should come along and begin to advise them that it would be much better, instead of letting the water out, to construct a machine which would ladle the water up from one side and pour it over the other side.

But the thing has gone too far. Already ruling governments feel their weak and defenseless position, and men of Christian principles are awakening from their apathy, and already begin to feel their power.

"I am come to send a fire on the earth," said Christ, "and what will I, if it be already kindled?"

And this fire is beginning to burn.