

LETTERS TO VARIOUS PERSONS

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LETTER TO A REVOLUTIONIST

By long and hard experience I have come to the conclusion that it is useless to argue with people who do not see what they cannot help seeing, because such people are not guided in their reflections by the search after truth, but by the defence of their position, their past and present. To argue with such people is the same as arguing with a builder who has erected a house, in which he has put all his pride and his life, and, finding that his angles are not right, does not want to know or see that a right angle is one-half of a straight angle.

He wants the angle which he has built as a right angle to be right, and so he, a clever and serious man, will not and cannot understand the properties of a right angle.

The same is true of the retorts which I constantly hear against the indubitable and obvious moral truth of nonresistance to evil, which are raised from two mutually hostile sides, - by the governmental conservatives and by the revolutionists.

One side began to build an obtuse angle, the other for the same reason began to build an acute angle. Both sides are angry at one another, and still more at the L square, which shows them that they are both wrong. You are defending against obviousness and yourselves the angle which you have started, and which does not agree with the right angle, which you know well. And so I am not going to prove to you what you know as well as I do ; but I will ask you for a moment to doubt that everything you have done was precisely what ought to have been done, and that what you intend to do is what ought to be, and from this abstract standpoint to look, say, at the arguments of your letter and their clear and direct purpose.

Your arguments reduce themselves to this, that a man, in the name of the love of men, may and should kill men, because there exist considerations, mysterious to me or else very incomprehensible, in the name of which men have always killed one another, the same by which Caiaphas found it more advantageous to kill Christ only than to ruin the whole nation. The purpose of all these arguments is the justification of murder. You even seem to be indignant, because there are some people who assert that it is never right to kill, just as I found people who were indignant over people who asserted that it was not right to beat women and children.

Humanity lives, the moral consciousness grows in it, at first reaching a point when it sees the moral impossibility of eating one's own parents, then of killing the superfluous children, then of killing captives, then of holding slaves, then of making the members of the family mind by beating them, and then – one of the chief acquisitions of humanity – the impossibility of attaining the aggregate good by means of murder, and in general by means of violence. There are people who have reached this stage of the moral consciousness, and there are people who have not reached it. There is nothing to dispute or argue about. No matter how conclusively it may be proved to me that I shall attain a higher good for my children and for all of humanity if I teach my children by means of a whip, I shall not be able to do so, just as I cannot kill. All I know is that, just as I cannot fight and beat children, I cannot kill. There is nothing to discuss about. All I can say is, that those who want to defend violence, and especially murder, must not speak of love, just as people who want to prove that the acute angle of their building is a right one must not speak of the perpendicularity of the sides, because, by asserting this, they refute themselves. If we talk at all of love, no examples of robbers will ever lead up to the necessity of killing another, but only to the simplest and most inevitable deduction from love, – to this, that a man will with his body defend another, will give his life for another, but will not take the life of another.

I did not have any intention of arguing, but I seem to have begun to argue. All right, let it be. Your letter not only interested me, but even touched me : under the thick bark (pardon me) of your superstitions I saw a serious mind and a good heart, and I should like fraternally to share with you the conception of life which gives me the good.

You say beautifully that the fundamental commandment is the commandment of love, but you are wrong when you state that all private commandments may impair it. You are here incorrectly confusing two different things, – the commandment not to eat pork and, say, the commandment not to kill. The first may be in disagreement with love, because it has not love for its object. But the second is only an expression of that degree of consciousness which humanity has reached in the definition of love. Love is a very dangerous word. You know that in the name of love for the family very bad acts are committed, in the name of love of country worse ones still, and in the name of love of humanity the most terrible horrors. It has long been known that love gives the meaning of life, but in what does love consist ? This question has continuously been solved by the wisdom of humanity, and always in a negative sense : it turns out that what incorrectly was called and passed under the form of love was not love. To kill people is not love, to torture and beat them in the name of something, to prefer one class to another, is also not love. And the commandment about not resisting evil with violence is a commandment which points out the limit where the activity of love ends. In this matter it is possible to go ahead, but not back, as you wish to do.

Here is a remarkable thing: you, who recognize that the meaning of life is in serving others in the name of love, murmur, because the safe and undoubted path of this service has been pointed out to you, just as though a man should murmur because the correct channel has been determined amidst shoals and submarine rocks. " Why must I be embarrassed ? Maybe I shall have to run aground on a shoal." Are you not saying the same, when you are provoked, because it is not right to kill a robber who is supposed to have killed some one ?

" But if it cannot be otherwise ? " Well, if it cannot be otherwise than settling on a shoal ? " Maybe I will settle on a shoal, but I cannot help but rejoice at having the path, and I cannot help but wish with all my strength to walk upon it." You adduce the comparison that the rule about not resisting evil is like the rule about not throwing children out of the window, when such may become a necessity, and from this you conclude that the proposition that it is not right to throw children out of a window is incorrect. It is only he who needs to torture children in general, who is concerned in an activity where this necessity presents itself all the time, that will insist that it is not right to prohibit one from throwing children out of a window, because such a necessity may arise at a fire. Pardon me, but this is so in our present case. And it is this that is so terrible. You, who are unquestionably a clever man, are going directly against common sense, and, though unquestionably a good and self-sacrificing person, you defend violence and murder.

Violence and murder provoked you, and you were carried away by a natural sentiment, let us say, and began to oppose violence and murder to violence and murder. Such an activity, though closely resembling that of an animal, and being irrational, has nothing senseless or contradictory about it; but the moment the governments or the revolutionists want to justify such activity on rational grounds, there appears the terrifying silliness and the inevitable heaping of sophisms, in order that the stupidity of such an attempt may not be seen.

Justifications of this kind are always based on the assumption of that imaginary robber who has in himself nothing that is human, who kills and tortures innocent people, and this imaginary beast, which is constantly in the process of killing the innocent, serves as a foundation for the reflections of all the violators as to the necessity of violence; but such a robber is a most exceptional and rare and even impossible case ; many persons may live hundreds of years, as I have lived sixty, without ever running across this fictitious robber in the process of committing his crime. Why should I base my rule of life on this fiction ?

When we discuss real life, and not a fiction, we see something quite different : we see people, and even ourselves, perpetrating the most cruel deeds, in the first place not alone, like the fictitious robber, but always in connection with other men, and not because we are beasts, who have nothing that is human, but because we abide in error and in offences. More than that : when we reflect upon life, we see, on the contrary, that the most cruel deeds, like the slaughter of men, dynamite, the gallows, guillotines, solitary

cells, property, courts, power and all its consequences, all have their origin, not in the fictitious robber, but in those men who base their rules of life on the silly fiction of the imaginary beast of a robber. Thus a man who is reflecting upon life cannot help but see that the cause of people's evil does in no way lie in the fictitious robber, but in our own errors and in the errors of others, one of the most cruel of which consists in this, that in the name of the fictitious evil an actual evil is committed, and so such a man, who has directed his activity on the cause of evil, on the eradication of error in himself and in others, and who has devoted his strength to this, will see before himself such a vast and fruitful activity that he will absolutely fail to see what his activity has to do with the fiction of the robber, with whom he will in all probability never fall in. And if he shall, he will in all probability do something quite different from what he will do who, having never seen the robber, bears him a grudge.

Now I beg you to forgive me, if I have written you anything that is blunt, and to try to understand me, where I have not expressed myself precisely ; above all, to believe me that I had but one incitement in writing you this letter, – love and respect for you, and the desire to be useful to you. Your loving

1886 (?). Lev Tolstoy.

ON NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL Your letter gave me much pleasure. AWhat you think about non-resistance to evil is quite correct, as you yourself know. It is at times sad to think that our society is in such deep darkness that it takes great efforts – such as you have made and but few are capable of – in order, on the one hand, to tear oneself away from the nets of formal, false Christianity, and on the other, from the revolutionary liberalism which controls the press, and to understand the simplest truths, such as that two times two are four, in the moral sphere, that is, that we ought not to do the same evil against which we fight. All this apparently complicated proposition about non-resistance to evil and the objection to it reduce themselves to this, that, instead of understanding it, as it is written, " Do not resist evil or violence with evil or violence," they understand (I even think, intentionally) that it says, « Do not resist evil, that is, be indulgent to evil, be indifferent to it;" whereas to resist evil, to struggle against it, is the only external problem of Christianity, and the rule about non-resistance to evil is given as a rule how to struggle in the most successful manner against evil.

It sa vs You are in the habit of struggling against evil by means of violence, or of retribution. This is a bad, a wicked, means. The best means is not to repay except with good." It is as though a man should try to push a door inward, when it opens outward, and another, knowing about it, should say, " Do not push, but pull." But this is so only in our backward cultured society. In America, for example, this question was worked out from all sides fifty years ago, and it is a shame to talk of it, as though we should have to prove the system of Copernicus to those who deny it, just as Galileo was denied.

Thus, on the one hand, I say, I sometimes feel ashamed of our ignorance, and on the other, I see the use of it. He who, like yourself, with his own mind pierces this bark of lies and ignorance, has the earnest of a firmer comprehension of everything connected with this proposition than he for whom it has all been masticated and put into his mouth.

There is, however, one thing in which you are not right, and that is, that you are too timid to follow your reflection in regard to the madmen. In thought not the slightest compromise can be admitted. There will inevitably be a compromise in practice (as you say correctly), and so we must much less admit it in theory. If I want to draw a line which is mathematically approximately straight, I cannot for a second admit that a straight line may not be the shortest distance between two points. If I admit that a madman may be locked up, I must also admit that he may be killed. Why should he suffer ?

Take the example of a mad dog : we certainly lock it up and kill it.

If I admit that a dangerous madman may be locked up, it will seem possible and even necessary to somebody to have us locked up. And do not be afraid, as you are, of thinking in this direction. If it be right to lock him up, there will be that violence which now causes the world to groan : in Russia there are one hundred thousand prisoners ; and if it is not right, what makes it so terrible ? Is it that the madman will kill me, you, my daughter, your mother? What is there about it that is terrible ? We all may and certainly will die. But we ought not to do any evil. In the first place, madmen rarely kill, and if they do, the subject to be pitied, to be helped, is not I, who only may be killed, but he, who is certainly distorted and suffering ; I must aid him, think of him. If people did not take the liberty for the sake of their safety to lock up and kill those madmen and so-called criminals, they would see to it that no new madmen and criminals be created. As it is, I know of a case of a wild man, a mendicant of forty-five years of age, who tramped with his daughter and did not stay winter nights in houses, and committed rape on his daughter ; another case of a boy of eleven years of age, who killed his five-year-old sister and made a candle from her fat, that all the locks during his burglaries might open ; a third case of a pupil of my school, who was given into apprenticeship, was taught to drink by his companions, drank until he got a brain disease, was sent to an insane asylum, to relieve his family and those about him, and there died.

We all know the Skublin.ski woman. They will all be sentenced, then they will be locked up, so that they shall not interfere with our producing the like, and then we say that it would be cruel to leave them at large. No, if they were at large, we should have no savages walking under the telephone wires, no boys making candles from their sister's fat, no savages drinking themselves into madness, no Skublinski women.

I shall be very glad to read what you wrote about my story (the Kreutzer Sonata). The other day I wrote for it an epilogue, which it seemed necessary to write, because people so boldly pretended that

they did not understand what was written there.

God help you to walk on the path on which you are now : it is the only one.

1800.

TWO LETTERS ON HENRY GEORGE

1

In reply to your letter I hasten with the greatest pleasure to say the following : I have known Henry George ever since the appearance of his Social Problems. I read the book and was struck by the correctness of his fundamental idea, and also by the exceptional clearness, popularity, and force of expression, the like of which cannot be found in scientific literature, and especially by that Christian spirit, also exceptional in scientific literature, with which the whole book is permeated. After reading this book, I went back in time and read his Progress and Poverty and still more appreciated the significance of Henry George's activity.

You ask for my opinion concerning Henry George's activity and his single-tax system. My opinion concerning these is as follows : Humanity is all the time moving forward in the sense of elucidating its consciousness and establishing forms of life to correspond to this changing consciousness. And so at every period of humanity's life there is taking place, on the one hand, the process of the elucidation of the consciousness, and, on the other, of the realization in life of what has been elucidated by the consciousness.

At the end of the last and the beginning of the present century there has been taking place in the Christian humanity the process of the elucidation of consciousness as regards the labouring class, which was in various aspects of slavery, and the process of the establishment of new forms of life to correspond to the elucidated consciousness, - the abolition of slavery and the substitution of free hired labour for it. At the present time there is taking place the process of the elucidation of consciousness in relation to the use of the land, and very soon, it seems to me, there must come the process of the realization of this consciousness in life.

In this very process, both of the elucidation of the consciousness in relation to the use of the land, and also of the realization of this consciousness, which forms one of the chief problems of our time, Henry George has been the leader and guide of the movement. In this does his vast and prime importance consist. With his beautiful books he has contributed to the elucidation of men's consciousness concerning this question and to placing it on a practical basis.

But with the abolition of the revolting right to the ownership of land there is repeated precisely what in my memory took place with

the abolition of slavery. The governments and the ruling classes, knowing that with the land question is connected their advantageous and prominent position in society, make it appear that they are concerned about the people's welfare and establish working men's banks, inspections, income taxes, and even an eight-hour day, but carefully ignore the land question, and with the aid of their subservient science, which proves everything they want, assert that the expropriation of the land is useless, harmful, impossible. Precisely the same is repeated as in the case of slavery. The men of the beginning of the present and the end of the last century for a long time felt that slavery was a terrible anachronism, which was revolting to the heart ; but the quasi-religion and science proved that there was nothing bad in slavery, that it was necessary, or, at least, that it was still untimely to abolish it. Now the same is repeated in relation to the ownership of land. The quasi-religion and quasi-science prove in the same way that there is nothing bad in the ownership of land and that there is no need whatever of abolishing it.

It would seem that it ought to be clear to every cultured man of our time that the exclusive right to the land held by men who do not work it and who deprive hundreds and thousands of needy families of access to it, is just as bad and mean a business as the ownership of slaves ; and yet we see cultured, refined aristocrats, English, Austrian, Prussian, Russian, who make use of this cruel and mean right, and not only are not ashamed of it, but even boast of it. Religion blesses such a possession, and the science of political economy proves that this must be so for the greatest good of men.

Henry George deserves credit not only for having shattered those sophisms by means of which religion and science justify the ownership of land, and to have carried the question to the highest degree of clearness, where it is impossible not to recognize the illegality of ownership of land, except by closing one's ears, but also in this, that he was the first to indicate the possibility of solving this question. He was the first to give a clear and direct answer to those customary objections made by the enemies of any progress, which are that the demands of progress are impractical, inapplicable dreams.

Henry George's project destroys this objection, by putting the question in such a way that to-morrow committees may be assembled for investigation and discussion of the project and for its transformation into a law. In Russia, for example, the discussion of the question of the purchase of the land, or of its seizure without any payment, for the purpose of its nationalization, may be begun to-morrow, and the question may in various circuitous ways be solved exactly as thirty-three years ago was solved the question of the liberation of the peasants.

The people have been shown the necessity of changing the situation, and the possibility of it has been shown to them (there may be changes and corrections in the system of the single tax, but the fundamental idea is practicable), and so they cannot help doing what

their reason demands of them. All that is necessary is for this idea to become public opinion ; for it to become public opinion, it is necessary to diffuse and elucidate it, – exactly what you are doing, and in that I sympathize with you with all my heart and wish you success.

2

Henry George's project consists in this : The advantages and conveniences of the use of land are not everywhere the same ; and since for more fertile, convenient tracts, which are close to well-settled places, there will always be many who will want them, – and the more there are who want them the better and more advantageous the tracts are, – it is necessary to estimate the value of all such tracts in accordance with the advantages which they offer : the more advantageous, higher, the less advantageous, lower. But such land as is not desired by many is not to be valued at all, and is to be left gratuitously to those who want to work it personally.

With such a valuation of the land it will happen, for example with us, in the Government of Tula, that fieldland will be valued at about five or six roubles per desyatina, garden-land near settlements at about ten roubles per desyatina, meadow-land at about fifteen roubles, and so forth. But in the city the desyatina will be valued at one hundred and at five hundred roubles, and in Moscow and St. Petersburg, in a busy place, and near the harbours of navigable streams, as high as thousands and tens of thousands of roubles per desyatina.

Having thus valued the land in the whole country, Henry George proposes to announce a law that, beginning with such a year and day, the land will not belong to any one in particular, but to the whole country, the whole nation, and that, therefore, every one who owns land must pay the country for it, that is, must pay to the whole nation as much as it has been valued at. This income is to be used for all public works of the state, so that it will take the place of all the taxes and all domestic and foreign customs revenues. From this project it would follow that a landed proprietor who now owns two thousand desyatinas might continue to own them, but would have to pay to the treasury, in Tula Government, between twelve and fifteen thousand per year, because there would be in the estate meadow and field land, and not one proprietor would be able to make such payments, and they would refuse to hold the land. But a Tula peasant in the same locality would pay about two roubles less per desyatina than what he is paying now, and he would always have free land about him, which he could take at five or six roubles, and, besides, he would have to pay no other taxes, and would get all commodities, whether domestic or foreign, without paying any dues. In the cities the owners of houses and factories might continue to own their properties, but would have to pay into the common treasury for the land occupied by them to the extent to which it is valued.

The advantage of such an arrangement will consist in this :

- (1) That there will be no men who are deprived of the possibility of using land.
- (2) That there will be no idle men, who own land and compel others to work for the right to use the land.
- (3) That the land will be in the hands of those who work it, and not of those who do not work.
- (4) That the people, having the possibility of working the land, will no longer sell themselves into slavery in the factories and plants, and as servants in the cities, but will scatter in the country.
- (5) That there will be no inspectors and collectors of taxes in factories, establishments, and custom-houses, but only rent-collectors for the land, which cannot be stolen and from which it is very easy to collect the rent.

And (6) above all else, that the people who do not work will be free from the sin of exploiting somebody else's labour, for which they are frequently not to blame, since they have been brought up in idleness from childhood and do not know how to work, and from the still greater sin of every lie and subterfuge for justifying themselves in this sin ; and that the working people will be freed from the offence and sin of envy and malice toward the people of leisure, and of condemnation of them, and that one of the causes of the division of men will be destroyed.

1893 (?).

LETTER TO A POLE Marian Edmundovich : - I have received your letter and have hastened to read your article in the Northern Messenger. Thank you very much for having pointed it out to me. The article is beautiful, and I learned from it much that is new and a joy to me. I learned also about Mickiewicz and Towianski. I used to ascribe their religious mood to the qualities which these two people alone possessed, but from your article I learned that they were only the originators of the true Christian movement, which, having been evoked by patriotism, continues until the present time, and is profoundly touching in its exaltation and sincerity.

My article, Patriotism and Christianity, called forth very many retorts. Philosophers and publicists, Russian, French, German, Austrian, retorted to me, and so do you. And all the retorts, like yours, reduce themselves to this, that my condemnations of patriotism are just only in relation to bad patriotism, but have no foundation, if referred to good and useful patriotism ; but in what this good and useful patriotism consists and in what way it differs from the bad patriotism, no one has so far taken the trouble to explain.

You write in your letter that " besides the patriotism of conquest and of the hatred of man, characteristic of the powerful nations,

there exists also an entirely different patriotism of the enslaved nations, who are striving after the defence of their native faith and tongue against the enemy." You define good patriotism by this condition of oppression. But oppression or the power of the nations does not make any difference in the essence of what is called patriotism. A fire will always be a burning and dangerous fire, whether it burns in a pyre or glows in a match. By patriotism is generally understood a preferential love for one's own nation, just as by egoism is understood a preferential love for one's own personality.

It is hard to imagine how such a preference of one nation over another can be considered a good, and so a desirable, quality. If you say that patriotism is more excusable in an oppressed person than in the oppressor, just as the manifestation of egoism is more excusable in a man who is being strangled than in one who is not troubled by any one, it will not be possible not to agree with you ; but patriotism cannot change its quality, according to whether it is manifested in the oppressed man or in the oppressor. This quality, – the preference of one nation over all the others, – like egoism, can never be good.

But patriotism is not only a bad quality,– it is also an irrational doctrine.

By the word " patriotism" is meant not only an immediate, involuntary love of one's nation and preference of it over all the others, but also the doctrine that such a love and preference are good and useful. Such a doctrine is particularly irrational among the Christian nations.

It is irrational, not only because it contradicts the fundamental meaning of Christ's teaching, but also because Christianity, attaining in its own way all that toward which patriotism is striving, makes patriotism superfluous, unnecessary, and interfering, like a lamp in daylight.

A man who, like Krasin ski, believes that " God's church is not this or that place, not this or that rite, but the whole planet, and all imaginable relations of individuals and nations among themselves," can no longer be a patriot, because he will in the name of Christianity perform all those things which patriotism can ask of him. Patriotism, for example, asks of its disciple that he sacrifice his life for the good of his countrymen ; but Christianity demands a similar sacrifice of one's life for the good of all men, and so such a sacrifice is so much more natural for the men of one's own nation.

You write of those terrible acts of violence which the savage, stupid, and cruel Russian authorities are perpetrating on the faith and language of the Poles, and this you adduce as some kind of a reason for a patriotic activity.

But I do not see it. To be indignant at such acts of violence and to counteract them with our whole might, we need not be a Pole or a patriot, but only a Christian.

In the given case, for example, I, who am not a Pole, will vie with any Pole as to the degree of my disgust and indignation on account of the savage and stupid measures of the people connected with the government, which are practised against the faith and language of the Poles ; 1

will also vie with any one in the desire to counteract these measures, not because I love Catholicism more than any other religion, or the Polish language more than any other, but because I try to be a Christian. And so, to prevent these things from happening in Poland, or in Alsace, or in Bohemia, we do not need the diffusion of patriotism, but the diffusion of true Christianity.

We can say that we do not care to know Christianity, and then we can laud patriotism ; but the moment we recognize Christianity, or even the consciousness of the equality of men and the respect for human dignity which arise from it, there is no place left for patriotism. What surprises me more than anything else in connection with it, is this, how it is that the advocates of patriotism in the oppressed nation, no matter how perfect and refined they may take it to be, do not see how harmful patriotism is for their own purposes.

In the name of what have all these acts of violence been perpetrated on language and faith in Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Alsace, Bohemia, against the Jews in Russia, wherever such acts have been committed ? Only in the name of that patriotism which you defend.

Ask our savage Russifiers of Poland and of the Baltic Provinces, and the persecutors of the Jews, why they do all that they do ? They will tell you that this is done for the defence of their own faith and language ; they will tell you that, if they do not do so, they will cause their own faith and language to suffer, – the Russians will turn Poles, Germans, Jews.

If there existed no doctrine as to patriotism being something good, there would never exist, at the end of the nineteenth century, men so base as to have courage to do all the base things which they are doing now.

But now the learned – the most savage persecutor of faith in your country is an ex-professor – have a point of support in patriotism. They know history, they know about all those useless horrors of the persecutions of language and faith, but thanks to the doctrine about patriotism, they have a justification.

Patriotism gives them a point of support, while Christianity takes it away from under their feet. And so the conquered nations, which are suffering from oppression, must destroy patriotism, tear down its theoretical foundations, ridicule it, and not extol it.

In defending patriotism, people speak of the individuality of the nationalities, saying that patriotism has for its aim the salvation of the individuality of the nation, and the individuality of the nations is assumed as an indispensable condition of progress. But, in the first place, who has said that this individuality is an

indispensable condition of progress? This has not been proved in any way, and we have no right to accept this arbitrary proposition as an axiom. In the second place, even if we admit that this is so, the nation's means for manifesting its individuality will not consist in trying to manifest it.

but, on the contrary, in forgetting its individuality and employing all its forces to do what it feels itself most competent to do and most destined for, just as the individual man will manifest his individuality, not by caring for it, but by forgetting it and employing all his forces and abilities in doing that toward which he is drawn by his nature.

It is the same as that people who are working for the support of their community should be doing all kinds of work in all kinds of places. Let each do what is most necessary for the community, according to the best of his strength and knowledge, and let him work with all his might, and they will all involuntarily work differently with different instruments and in different places.

One of the most common of the sophisms which are used for the defence of what is immoral consists in intentionally confusing what is with what ought to be, and in beginning to speak of one thing and then substituting another for it. This sophism is most frequently employed in relation to patriotism. It is this, that a Pole is nearer and dearer than any one else to a Pole, a German to a German, a Russian to a Russian. We have also this, that in consequence of historical causes and bad education, the men of one nation experience unconsciously ill-will toward the people of another nation. All this exists, but the recognition of what exists, like the recognition of the fact that every man loves himself more than any one else, can nowise prove that this must be so.

On the contrary : the whole work of all humanity and of every individual man consists only in suppressing these predilections and ill-wills, in struggling against them, and in acting consciously toward other nations and toward the people of other nations just as one would act in relation to his countrymen. It is quite superfluous for us to trouble ourselves about patriotism, as about a feeling which it is desirable to educate in every man. God, or Nature, has without us taken care of this feeling so that it is inherent in every man, and we have no need to trouble ourselves about educating it in ourselves and in others. What we ought to trouble ourselves about is not patriotism, but how to introduce into life the light which is within us, and thus to change it and bring it nearer to the ideal which stands before us. This ideal, which at the present time is standing before every man, who is enlightened with the true light of Christ, does not consist in the reestablishment of Poland, Bohemia, Ireland, Armenia, and not in the preservation of the unity and greatness of Russia, England, Germany, Austria, but, on the contrary, in the destruction of this unity and greatness of Russia, England, and Germany, in the abolition of all those forceful, anti-Christian combinations, called states, which are in the way of all true progress and beget the sufferings of the oppressed and vanquished nations, – all that evil, from which modern humanity is suffering. This destruction is possible only through

real enlightenment, through the recognition that, before being Russians, Poles, Germans, we are men, disciples of the same teacher, the sons of the same father, brothers among ourselves, – and this was understood by the best representatives of the Polish people, as you have beautifully shown in your article. And this is from day to day understood by an ever greater number of men.

Thus the days of governmental violence are counted, and the liberation of not only the conquered nations, but also of the oppressed labourers is near, if we ourselves are not going to defer the time of this liberation by participating in words and deeds in the governments' acts of violence. But the recognition of patriotism, no matter of what kind, as a good quality, and the incitement of the nation to it, are among the chief impediments in the attainment of the ideals which are standing before us.

I thank you once more for your kind letter, and the excellent article, and for the opportunity which you gave me once more to verify, think out, and express my ideas on patriotism. Accept the assurance of my respect.

September 10, 1895.

RELATION TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE EXISTING ORDER

1

(From a private letter, 1896)

The existing order of life is subject to destruction. This is admitted both by those who strive to destroy it and those who defend it.

The competitive order is to be destroyed and to give way to the communistic; the capitalistic order is to be destroyed and to give way to the socialistic; the order of militarism is to be destroyed and to give way to disarmament and arbitration; the separatism of the narrow nationality is to be destroyed and to give way to cosmopolitanism and a universal brotherhood; all religious superstitions are to be destroyed and to give way to a rational religious, moral consciousness; every kind of despotism is to be destroyed and to give way to liberty; in short, violence is to be destroyed and to give way to a free and loving union of men.

So far two means have been employed for the attainment of all these ends, – the first, the violent revolutions, the overthrow of the men who supported the undesirable order, and the substitution of others, who were to establish a new, desirable order of life; and the other, which, without destroying the existing order, and entering into the ranks of the government, consists in slowly and by degrees obtaining that change of the existing order which is demanded by the human consciousness of our time.

The first method does not attain its end, because, in the first place, every violent destruction of the existing order evokes in the majority of indifferent people a reaction, a desire at all costs to retain the existing order, and even the one which existed before, when there were no perturbations, and so it calls forth a reaction, which only removes the attainment of the end. In the second place, because the men who enter into the power, while retaining the old governmental machine of violence, very soon become just as despotic, sometimes even more despotic than those which are overthrown. (The reaction of the great French Revolution against the despotism of the royal power, the Napoleonic reaction and that of the year '15, the reactions after the years '30, '48, and '81 in Russia, and now the reaction after the anarchistic explosions and murders in France.)

The second method, which consists in changing the government, by taking part in it and improving it, still less attains its end, because not only the men who enter into the ranks of the government without the aim of a gradual improvement of the existing order, but also those who recognize the government and enjoy the advantages of the government only in order to be able to modify and improve it, imperceptibly to themselves, very soon and inevitably (because their whole life is based on governmental violence) become, not only no correctors and changers of the government's violence, but even the most ardent defenders of the same. It is the same as though a man who undertakes to mend a boat should sit down in it and row.

In the course of several generations men, having come to see the falseness of their situation, have been trying to change it, now with one means, and now with another, but neither means produces any effect, and the situation is growing worse and worse.

There exists one means for the attainment of this end, – a very simple and natural means, which consists in leaving the state and the government alone and not thinking of them, but in thinking only of our life, in elucidating to ourselves the end and significance of our life, and in leading our life in conformity with the elucidated consciousness. And, strange to say, this means – which entirely leaves out the questions about state, government, society – is the only one which solves (and in the most incontestable manner at that) all the political, governmental, and social questions.

This means, in relation to the political, governmental, and social questions, consists, instead of forcibly destroying the existing order of life, or, with the desire to destroy or change it, building our life upon it, in the simplest kind of a method, which, it would seem, would be the first to occur to people, – namely, in taking no part in that violence-using structure of life which we deny and wish to change.

In order not to take part in this violence-using and false structure of life, we must (1) clearly understand the meaning and destiny of our life, (2) clearly understand what in our life corresponds to the

destiny of our life, and (3) know those means with which it is possible for us to harmonize our life with the demands of our consciousness.

2

(From the diary of 1895)

The situation of the majority of men, enlightened with a true enlightenment of brotherly love, who are now suppressed by the deceit and cunning of the violators, through their compelling this majority to ruin itself, is terrible and seems hopeless.

Only two ways out present themselves, and both are closed: one consists in rending violence by means of violence, terrorism, dynamite bombs, daggers, as did our nihilists and anarchists, – outside of us to break up that plot of the governments against the nations ; or to enter into a concerted action with the government, making concessions to it, and, taking part in it, slowly to disentangle the net which binds the nation, and to free it. Both ways out are closed.

Dynamite and the dagger, as experience shows us, only provoke reaction, impair the most precious force, – the only one which is in our power, – public opinion.

The other way out is closed because the governments have already found out to what extent the participation of people wishing to transform it should be admitted. They allow only that which does not impair the essentials, and are very sensitive in regard to what is detrimental for them, – they are sensitive, because their existence is at stake. They admit people who do not agree with them and who wish to reform the governments, not only in order to satisfy the demands of these people, but for their own sakes, for the sake of the governments. These people would be dangerous to the governments if they were left outside the governments and rose against them, by influencing the only, most powerful governmental instrument, – public opinion, – and so they have to make these men harmless, attract them by means of concessions, made by the government, – they must make them harmless, something like the microbe cultures, – and then only use them for the purpose of serving the government's ends, that is, for the purpose of oppressing and exploiting the masses.

Both ways out are solidly and impermeably closed.
What is left ?

It is impossible to break open a way with violence, – you only increase the reaction ; equally impossible it is to enter the ranks of the government, – one becomes a tool of the government. One thing is left, – to struggle against the government with the instrument of thought, of words, of acts, – of life, without making any concessions to it, without entering its ranks, without increasing its force through us.

This one thing is necessary and will certainly be successful. And God wants it, and Christ taught it.

3

(From the diary of 1595)

We have come to such a pass that a simply good and sensible man cannot be a partaker in the government, that is, cannot be one – I am not speaking of Russia cannot in England be one with the landownership, the exploitation of the factories and capitalists, the orders in India, the flogging, the opium trade, the annihilation of nationalities in Africa, the preparations for war, and the wars themselves.

And the point of support, when a man says, " I do not know anything about the government, and I do not care to know ; but I know that I cannot live contrary to my conscience," – that point of view is imperturbable, and upon it ought all the men of our time to stand, in order to move life forward. " I know what my conscience commands me to do, but you, people who are busy with the government, arrange the government as you wish, so that it may correspond to the demands of the conscience of the people of our time." Meanwhile the people occupy the standpoint of the correction and improvement of the governmental forms, and thus, by recognizing the necessity of the government, lose their imperturbable point of support.

LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE Dear Sib : – I write to you, as man to man, with a feeling of respect and good-will, which I ask you to show also to my letter. Comprehension and agreement are possible only when these sentiments are sincere.

What I have in mind is the persecutions to which the officers of your ministry subject such persons as have my writings which are prohibited in Russia, and give them to read to those who ask for them. So far as I know, many different persons have been subjected to such persecutions.

One of the latest cases was that of a lady physician, Mrs. N-----, of Tula, who was searched and put in jail, and now is under trial before the investigating magistrate, being accused of spreading my writings.

This case of Mrs. N-----, who is no longer a young woman, and is of feeble health, extremely nervous, and highly respectable as regards her spiritual qualities, which have earned her the love of all those who know her, is particularly striking.

So far as I know, this is what served as the cause of it : Mrs. N----- is a good acquaintance of mine and a friend of my daughters. A Tula labourer wrote to me several times, asking me to give him my work, My Religion, to read. As I did not have a copy of it to spare and did not know the man, I left several of his letters unanswered.

When this winter I again received a letter from him, asking for the same, I turned the letter over to my daughter, asking her, if she had the book for which he asked, to send it to him. My daughter, who did not have a copy to spare and recalled the fact that Mrs. N--- lived in the same city of Tula, from which the petitioner had written, and had some of my forbidden writings, sent the petitioner her card, with the request that the bearer be given whatever she had. This request of my daughter, addressed to Mrs. N-----, served as a cause for her arrest and for all those torments to which she has been subjected.

I think that such measures are irrational, useless, cruel, and, above all, unjust. They are irrational, because there is no explanation, and there can be none, why, out of those thousands of people who have my writings and give them to their friends to read, this one Mrs. N----- should be selected for persecution. These measures are useless, because they attain no end : they do not stop anything, because the evil which it is supposed to stop continues to exist among thousands of men, whom it is impossible to have all arrested and kept in prisons. These measures are cruel, because for many feeble and nervous people, such as Mrs. N----- is, domiciliary visits, inquests, and especially imprisonment, may be the causes of severe nervous diseases, as was the case with Mrs. N-----, and even of death. Above all else, these measures are in the highest degree unjust, because they are not directed against the person from which proceeds that which by the government is considered to be an evil.

Such a person in the given case am I : I write those books, and in writing and through oral intercourse disseminate those ideas which the government considers to be an evil, and so, if the government wants to counteract the dissemination of this evil, it must direct upon me all the measures now used by it against those persons who accidentally fall under its influence, and who are guilty but of this, that they have some forbidden books in which they are interested, and that they give these to their friends to read. The government ought to act thus also for this other reason, that I not only do not conceal this my activity, but, on the contrary, in this very letter announce that I have written and disseminated those books which are considered harmful by the government, and that I continue to write and disseminate, in books, in letters, and in conversations, just such ideas as those which are expressed in my books.

The essence of these ideas is this, that the unquestionable law of God, which stands higher than all human laws, was revealed to men ; according to it we must all stop warring and doing violence to one another, and should, on the contrary, aid one another, – we must act toward others as we would have others act toward us.

These ideas, with the practical deductions from them, I have expressed in my books, and am trying still more clearly and more accessibly to express in a book which I am writing now. The same ideas I express in conversations and in letters which I write to

friends and to strangers. The same ideas I express even now to you, in pointing out those cruelties and acts of violence, which are contrary to God and which are committed by the officers of your ministry.

Gamaliel's words, which were said concerning the dissemination of the Christian teaching, " If this thing is from men, it will be destroyed, and if it is from God, you cannot destroy it ; beware, therefore, lest you become an adversary of God," will always remain a lesson of true governmental wisdom in its relation to the manifestation of the spiritual activity of men. If this activity is spurious, it falls of itself ; if it has God's work for its contents, like that God's work of our time which strives to substitute the principle of rational love for that of violence, no external conditions can either accelerate or retard its completion. If the government shall permit the unhampered dissemination of these ideas, they will spread slowly and evenly ; if the government shall, as it does now, subject to persecution those men who have made these ideas their own and transmit them to others, the dissemination of these ideas will be diminished amidst timid, weak, and unsettled men to the extent to which it will be intensified among strong, energetic, and settled men. And so the process of the dissemination of the truth will not stop or be arrested or be accelerated, no matter how the government may act.

Such, in my opinion, is the general and invariable law of the dissemination of truth, and so the wisest thing the government can do in relation to the manifestation of undesirable ideas is not to undertake anything, still more, not to use such unworthy, cruel, and obviously unjust measures as the tormenting of people, only because they are doing what tens of thousands of men have been doing, without being persecuted for it.

But if the government insists on not being inactive, and on punishing, threatening, and abating what it considers to be an evil, the least irrational and the least unjust thing it can do consists in directing all the measures for punishing, threatening, and abating the evil against what

>y the government is considered to be its source, that is, against me, the more so, since I declare in advance that I will continue without cessation to do until my death what the government considers to be an evil, but what I consider to be my sacred duty before God.

Do not imagine, I beg you, that in asking you to direct against me the measures of violence which have been employed against some of my acquaintances, 1

assume that the employment of such measures against me presents any difficulties for the government, – that my popularity and my social standing defend me against domiciliary visits, inquests, deportation, imprisonment, and other worse acts of violence. Not only do I not think so, but I am also convinced that if the government shall act with determination against me, will deport or imprison me, or will apply even severer measures, this will not offer any especial difficulties, and public opinion will not be

provoked, nay, the majority of men will fully approve of such a mode of action and will say that that ought to have been done long ago.

God knows that, writing this letter, I am not submitting to any desire to dare the government or to have something to say, but that it is called forth by a moral necessity which consists in taking the guilt off innocent people for acts committed by me, and, above all, is written in order to point out to the members of the government, you among the number, the cruelty, irrationality, and injustice of the measures employed, and to ask you, to the best of your ability, to put a stop to them and to free yourself of the moral responsibility for them.

I shall be very thankful to you, if you shall answer me with a simple unofficial letter, telling me what you think of what I have expressed, and whether you will fulfil my prayer, which is, that in the future you will transfer all the persecutions, if they are indispensable, to me, from the government's standpoint the chief offender.

With the feeling of sincere good-will, I remain respectfully yours.

Moscow, April 20, 1896.

ON THE DECEPTION OF THE CHURCH

I have received and continue to receive your numerous letters, dear-----, and I should like to answer in detail what to me is the most important part in them.

I think it superfluous to reply to your unjust assumptions that (1) I am angry at you, (2) that I think that our life ends here, (3) that I may and must be worried by the financial help to some (selected by you out of millions of just such people, who surround me), because all these replies have been made by me in advance in my writings with as great a circumstantiality as I am capable of. (I send you a collection of my writings.) In my prohibited writings, you know, you will find these answers.

I cannot be angry at you, because, above all, I love you, and so I should myself like to help you in your hard and dangerous situation. I am speaking of your desire to hypnotize yourself into the ecclesiastic faith. This is very dangerous, because with such hypnotization that which is most precious in man - his reason - is lost.

I shall begin from the beginning. I began this letter before receiving the letter about Isaak Sirin with the copy of the declaration to the governor, and this letter of yours and the declaration still more provoked in me the desire, and called out in me the consciousness of my duty to try to help you, and, I will say frankly, not you alone, but many people, who are in the same situation with you, or are about to enter into it. I am speaking of

sincere, pure men, who adopt this or that conviction, not in order to justify their situation, but only because they see the truth in it.

One day a very rich and distinguished lady of the court, speaking of faith, told me that she believed like "Mother Akulina," and she apparently thought that she had said something very clever and even profound : such a refined lady, and she condescends to believe like Mother Akulina. But she not only said something stupid, but even told an absolute untruth.

This lady is educated in all kinds of languages, has studied cosmography, history, knows of the existence of Voltaire, Renan, Brahminism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and so she cannot believe like Mother Akulina. Mother Akulina, in her belief in the Mother, the Queen of Heaven, and in Saint Nicholas, and in the Father, the King of Heaven, who lives in heaven, and so forth, believes in the highest that has been reached by her consciousness, and this belief not only does not present any contradiction with her comprehension of life, but even illuminates and elucidates for her the phenomena of the world. For the lady this is impossible. She knows that the world was not created six thousand years ago ; that mankind has not been derived from Adam and Eve, but from the evolution of the animal ; she knows that, besides the Christians of her denomination, there are five times as many people of other faiths than the Christian ; she knows that Christianity has been corrupted and has brought forth hundreds and thousands of inimical sects, and has degenerated into the Inquisition and into savage fanaticism; she knows how the ecumenical councils, in which the dogmas were established, took place; she knows that the same happened in Buddhism with their King Asoka, and in other faiths; she knows that the religions are subject to the same law of evolution as organisms and states,— they are born, develop, reach the highest point, and then grow old and disappear, like the Egyptian and the Persian religions; she knows that our so-called Holy Scripture did not come down from heaven, but was written by men, was purged and corrupted, and so cannot have any infallible authority; she knows that there is no firm heaven, and that, therefore, neither Enoch, nor Elijah, nor Christ had any place to go to, when they flew away from the earth, and that, if they flew upwards, they are flying still ; she knows that all those miracles with which they try to prove the authenticity of the ecclesiastic faith are repeated in all the other faiths, — such as the birth from a virgin, and the signs at birth, and the prophecy and the wisdom in childhood, and the cures, and the resurrection, and everything else, — that all these inventions of miracles are repeated in all the faiths, just as are the miracles of the exploits of the heroes in the popular epos. The lady must know all that, because she has been taught all that, and she could have read all that in books, which are accessible to her, and all that is known to those gentlemen who frequent her drawing-room.

And so she not only has no right to believe like Mother Akulina, but even cannot believe like her. She can say that she believes so, but she cannot believe so. For her to believe, she needs a faith in

which she could, like that woman, believe as in the highest reached by her cognition, and a faith which would not only not contradict her comprehension of the phenomena of the world, but would also illumine, elucidate, and unify all her knowledge.

This lady will not understand me, because she needs the faith of Mother Akulina, in order that she may be able to continue to live as she does, that is, impiously to swallow every day, for the gratification of her lusts and luxury, the labour of hundreds of working people, and, at the same time, to speak of God and Christ and of her religiousness. Only by adopting and professing the faith of Mother Akulina, in other words, the faith of men who lived two thousand years ago, can she lead such an inipious life with the self-contentment of religiousness. And so I can understand it in the case of the lady ; but what do you, who are deported to the end of the world and who are going from one prison to another, and from place to place, because you want to introduce the Christian truths into life, what do you want with this terrible deception and with this insolvable contradiction between your beliefs and your knowledge and comprehension of the phenomena of the universe ?

Just think what you profess and what situation you are in. I understand, it is very nice and agreeable to feel one in faith with those who surround us, when the bells toll the " hours " at Lent, and the communicants go and ask each other's forgiveness, and beautifully pray in beautiful churches, calling forth images of the ancient, peaceful, solemn life, – it would be very nice to be united with them and to live that life. But that is a self-deception,– it is only the playing of a part. But your situation is not this, that you now, at Lent, are in Pudozh, but that you are living in God's world, upon the planet Earth, which is inhabited by fifteen thousand millions of inhabitants of all kinds of races, who profess different religions, in this one hundred thousandth year or so after the appearance of the first men, – in one of the corners of the northern hemisphere, amidst a nation called Russian, and you live in this place and in this time by the will of God, the one by whose will not only this planet Earth exists with its inhabitants, but also this to me obviously infinite world. You know this position of yours, and in conformity with this position you ought to establish your relation to God, that is, to establish a relation which would be just as good for any man in your situation, – a relation which would be clear, comprehensible, and obligatory for every thinking person, a Japanese, a Malay, a Zulu.

And what relation to God are you, with your knowledge, trying to establish? You say: " God revealed Himself and His truth five thousand years ago to one small Asiatic nation, and not completely at that : nineteen hundred years ago He revealed it in full, in that He sent His son, also God, to the same little nation. And the fact that the people then killed this son of God caused the sin of the first men and of all those who came after to be redeemed. But besides this redemption, God through this son of His established the church, which guards the whole truth and aids in the salvation of men by means of sacraments,–

by smearing one with oil, giving one bread and wine to swallow, – and this church exists only in Pudozh or in Russia; but all men who have lived before this church and who live outside of it are not taken into consideration.” Tell this, and many other things about baptism, images, masses for the dead, and, above all, about a punishing and redeeming God, to some fresh, sensible man, who has never heard of it, – and he will stare at you or will run away from you, for fear that in your madness you will begin to strike him, or he will bind you as a dangerous lunatic.

Only because this poison was inoculated in us in our childhood, we bear it all, as though it were not noticeable. And what is most terrible, this frightful, slowly inoculated poison has made useless and inefficacious for us Christ’s faith, which answers the highest demands of the men of our time.

We have lived nineteen hundred years since Christ; but His teaching in all its purity even now completely answers all our demands for the establishment of our relation to God, not to the God of the Jews and of the Orthodox, or Catholic, or Protestant Church, but to that God by whose will exists this infinite universe, and amidst it the planet Earth, and upon earth I, who live after hundreds of thousands of years of the evolution of animal life in Pudozh, or in New York, or in the deserts of Africa.

The chief difference between the private, exclusive relation, which the churchmen, the Buddhists, the Brahmins, the Mohammedans, and others call their religion, and the true Christian faith is this, that all those religions, to say nothing of their incompatibility with knowledge and common sense, have the property of excluding, denying one another, whereas Christ’s religion is such that it is not only comprehensible and accessible to everybody, but also cannot be rejected, cannot be disagreed with. This religion is not only not exclusive, but, on the contrary, coincides with everything true and exalted in all the other religions.

It says that the beginning of everything is spiritual, rational, and full of love. This beginning is called God and Father. It calls this beginning Father, because man recognizes this beginning in himself. Entering into life, it seems to man that he lives as an animal, that his animal being is his ego ; but in proportion as his reason is developed, he sees that this animal is not free, that it suffers and perishes, and in his consciousness he feels that there is something which is not subject to oppression, nor to suffering, nor to perdition ; and man enters into a contradiction with himself and into despair.

It is to this internal contradiction that, developing it, Christ’s teaching gives an answer. It tells a man: it only seems to you that you live as an animal ; but that only seems so to you, as it seems to you that the bank is running, when you travel in a boat, or as it seems to you that the sun is moving. What lives in man is only his spiritual, rational, and good beginning, – the son of God. Man must transfer his ego from the animal to the spiritual, and

satisfy the demands, not of the animal, but of the spiritual being. Man need but understand this, and the contradiction of his life disappears: every oppression, every suffering disappears, he becomes completely free.

Death is destroyed, because what is spiritual, what is God Himself, cannot be destroyed: it always was, is, and will be.

In this transference of our ego from the animal to the spiritual lies the essence of Christ's teaching, and the details of this teaching, begun with Christ and continued by all humanity, consist in the destruction, the disclosure of those offences by means of which the men of the animal life, from the inertia of tradition, try to conceal from man his ruin in the animal life and to maintain him on this false path. The disclosure of these offences is the work of the life of men, – that which God wants of men.

Such, in its broadest features, is Christ's teaching, – that teaching by which the relation of man to the world is established. And this teaching is not exceptional, but general, the highest, most accessible to all, and not only does not contradict the other teachings and modern knowledge, but even illumines and elucidates them.

And here, in the place of it, we will return to the comprehension of life, with sacrifices, redemptions, sacraments, an evil, punishing and rewarding, personal God, – such as it was five thousand years ago. What for? God save us from that, dear friend.

What you do and what you may do appears to me like this: a man is travelling in a steam automobile. He does not know the road, or simply is tired of travelling fast, and he wants to arrest the motion, – so he sticks a rod between the wheels. He puts in one rod: the wheels catch it, but the machine still goes on, though more slowly. He lets down another rod, from the thinner end. There seems to be no trouble: the machine still works; but the wheels will soon catch the thicker end of the rod, and then the machine will be clogged and spoiled. We.

cannot with impunity admit anything irrational, anything not justified by reason, into our faith. Reason is given us from above, to guide us. But if we choke it, this will not pass with impunity. And the ruin of reason is the most terrible ruin.

Here I have told you a part of what I think, – I told it lovingly to you. Please, do not answer me by points, discussing any one of them in particular. If you disagree, explain to me how you combine your faith with your comprehension of life, and briefly and clearly express to me your world-conception.

Meanwhile good-bye. I kiss you.

Moscow, March 16, 1806.

THREE PHASES OF LIFE

You give me three examples of your inconsistency :

(1) malice toward men, (2) the lack of correspondence between life and the comprehension of life, and (3) the doubt in the future, the eternal life.

The first,— malice toward men, the impotence, not only of love, but also of forgiveness,— I have experienced more powerfully than anything else, and I suffer very much from it. I console myself with the thought that God aids me in this, and there are interruptions of malice, there are flashes of the consciousness of my guilt, my sins, and so — a cessation of condemnations, and even manifestations of pity, where there was malice. I am sure that God gives you, too, these minutes, these sparks of fire. And if there are sparks, there will be warmth and light.

I will tell you what that tinder is into which I catch these sparks, and with what I try to fan the fire in my heart.

Above all, repentance; not wholesale repentance: " I have sinned, father, I have sinned," or, still worse, the admission that I am wholly in sin, that I was born in sin, that every step of mine is sin. This admission, collecting, compacting all the sins in one heap, seems to separate them from me and deprives me of that inevitable spiritual use, which by the mercy of God is attached to every sin, as an antidote to a poison.

Repentance does not consist in repenting of the whole past life in general, but in seeing in our soul the traces and remnants (it is well, if only traces and remnants) of former sins, definite, comprehensible, committed then and then, and in forming from these remnants a vivid picture of our former life, and the present viciousness and savagery, for every point in particular.

What ought we to do, in order that we may stop being angry at a man, in order to make peace, forgive, if there is anything to forgive, and even pity and love him ? Best of all is to think of some sin of ours in his presence, a sin like his. That is particular happiness, and then there is an immediate cure. But that happens but rarely (but it only seems to be rare because we do not look for it well), and so we have to look for a similar, or at least equal, or, still better, worse sin, in the presence of others. And if we do so sincerely, seriously, and vividly think of our abomination, — we shall forgive, make peace, and, God willing, pity and love.

Of course, God forbid that we dissemble, pretending to love and pity, when we do not. That is worse than hatred. And similarly, God forbid that we should not catch and fan this spark of pity and love for our enemy, that divine love, when God sends us this spark. There can, indeed, be nothing more precious.

We have a terrible habit of forgetting, — of forgetting our evil,

our sins. And there is no more radical means for forgetting our sins, than wholesale repentance. All the sins are boiled down, as it were, into one impermeable mass, with which nothing can be done, and if a nice little sin of our own is needed, such as would redeem the sin of those who sin against us, none is found. But this museum ought to be kept in order, so that we may find at once what is needed, when it is needed, and all the objects, the sins, ought to be kept separately, so that they should not cover one another, but may appear in the most impressive form. We must not forget, but remember, always remember our sins, in order by means of them to mitigate the condemnation of others. I think that the chief difference between a good and a bad man is this, that the good man remembers all the evil which he has done, and forgets and does not see the good, and a bad man does the other way.

Thus, as to the first point, I can tell you what has been pointed out to me by God: do not forgive yourself, and then you will forgive others.

The second, the lack of correspondence between life and that which, you say, it ought to be, and which, we may say outright, it will be, is its symptom, that is, the sign of life : the acorn does not correspond to the oak, the egg to the hen, the repentant sinner to a saint. In all of them there takes place a motion from a lower condition to a higher, from the worse to the better, from the lesser to the greater, – all that is not precise, – there is taking place life.

Now in this life there is a threefold relation :

(1) Life goes on, and a being, like the acorn, a child, often even a man, does not feel, does not cognize this motion, and neither helps nor retards it.

(2) Man recognizes this motion, – he sees toward what it is moving, and he hastens this motion, hurries to be what he ought to become. The boy wants to be a grown-up: he imagines that if he puts on a uniform, goes out hunting, drinks, and swears, he will be a man. The same takes place in the religious life : a man sees that he is going toward the good, toward the liberation from sin, toward sanctity, and imagines that, if he sacrifices wethers and tapers, if he goes to confession and communion, or if he assures himself that such sacrifice has been made, he is purged of sin, that he will actually be freed from sin and will reach sanctity. That is a terrible path. As a boy is corrupted, if he wishes to be what he is not, so a man who religiously wants to be something he is not.

(3) Man sees whither he is going, knows that the disagreement between his life and his consciousness is a condition of his life, and with all his strength tries in his life to diminish this disagreement, knowing that this is not his own personal matter, but that of his Father, of Him who sent him hither such as he is, and implanted in him the consciousness of what he ought to be and will be. And man, knowing that this lack of correspondence is not

something especial, something accidental, but the law of every life, without which no motion is possible, and no approximation to the eternal and infinite perfection, God, – knowing this, man sees in this lack of correspondence the condition of his life and good.

Indeed, if man did not have any comprehension, and the resulting consciousness of the disagreement between his life and what it ought to be, and if life were such as it was when he was a senseless sinner (it is not only you and I, but everybody, that passes through sin), it would be worse for him. And if there were not his sinfulness, and he could at once be what he wants to be according to his comprehension, it would be worse still : there would be no reason for living, no life at all.

But you will say: " Why do I not go ahead? Why am I still such as I was?" Thank God for feeling thus.

It is bad when a man says to himself : " I am better than I was ; here, for example, I do not smoke, do not fornicate, do not even grow angry, – I do not give my tithe as before, and I am not like the publican." God help us always to be dissatisfied and not to see those steps which we have made (if we have made them), upon approaching Him. These tiny steps are noticeable only when we do what we ought not to do, – when we compare ourselves with our former selves, or with others. We must try to be perfect, as the Father is perfect, and so to compare ourselves with Him, that is, the highest, infinite good and truth, and then we shall not see our steps. What will support us in life is not these Lilliputian steps on the path of goodness, but only the consciousness of our doing the will of God. God's will is this, that, having done everything we can for the destruction >>f the disagreement, we may recognize that we have done what we cannot help doing, as in the case of the labourer and the husbandmen who return from the field. Another striking thing is this, that this lack of correspondence between consciousness and life, which so disturbs many, is always one and the same in the case of all men, – in the case of the holiest and of the most sinful of men. At least

I know in my own case that in the sacred minutes of consciousness at every point of in y path of life, the lack of correspondence and the dissatisfaction with myself have been one and the same, – constant. I did not feel it only when I sank morally. Consequently it is not something special, but the property of a true human life.

Yes, the devil cannot say to sensible people who sin, and know that they sin : " You are not sinning at all, when you sin, kill, fornicate, and so on. Continue to live in the same way. You and everybody else will fare well." The people will not believe him. So he invents a sophism which leads to the same, that is, that men, sinning, should believe that they are not sinning, and should bathe in their sins, without noticing them, – and so he says to them: " Let us assume that your life is such as will not lead all to the good and as may be called sinful. Let us assume that you sin, living as you do; but you cannot even live without sinning, and the consciousness of sinning is too oppressive, and God could not have meant that all should constantly be tormented by this consciousness,

and so He has given a means for freeing oneself from this consciousness. This means is the sacrifices which you make, or which are made for you, – in general redemptory sacrifices.” We have so long been used to this, we have, so imbibed with the milk this representation of a life in which we can be at peace and satisfied with ourselves, that that natural, inevitable condition of the living human soul in which we feel that we strive from what is worse to what is better, that is, the lack of correspondence between life and consciousness, presents itself to us as something exceptional.

Ifrequently think of the hero of a story which I should like to write : a man educated, let us say, in a circle of revolutionists, himself at first a revolutionist, then a populist, socialist, Orthodox, a monk on Mount Athos, then an atheist, a man of a family, then a Dukhobor.

He begins everything, throws away everything, without ending anything. People laugh at him. He has done nothing, and dies ingloriously somewhere in a prison.

Dying, he thinks that he has wasted his life for nothing, but it is he who is a saint.

The third is the suspicion that everything which you think and feel about eternal life may be the fruit of unconscious self-deception, which results from fear before the apparition of life. You write that you cannot clearly express this condition. Indeed, it cannot be expressed.

This condition is only a sign of something unfinished in the soul.

If there is nothing, we should live and enjoy ourselves.

But you can no longer do so. If all this is a bad deception, an apparition, we ought to shoot ourselves or be silent. But you cannot do that, either. But if there is a God, we must throw off, cut down everything which separates us from Him. And that you are doing and will do.

Again the terrible trick of the devil – the frivolous, ungrounded, false faith in the future, and not in the eternal life. I think that if there were no false teaching about the future life, no one would have any doubt as to the eternal life (the one about which your child, who undoubtedly lived it, told you so clearly). Again the devil cannot in any way say that there is no eternal life, when there is but the one eternal life, and we cannot know any other (the dead child lives it). Again he invents a trick : the carnal life is a crossing of a river, an abyss, between this shore and the next, an unquestionably firm ford, which is right on our path, and it is impossible to miss it, or to doubt in its firmness or that it leads to the good.

And so the devil builds a bridge, which ends in a pit, which does not at all lead whither it ought to lead, and the devil takes people there under the pretext that it is easier to cross on his bridge. And standing on his bridge and seeing the abyss before oneself, one believes that there is no life.

I have experienced it. Do not believe him. If there is any doubt, it

is only so because you have not lost your belief in the future life of personalities. That is his, the devil's, deception.

Eternal life is like a balloon. The gas is not our force, but God's, which draws us upwards; the cables which hold it down are the delusions; and the ballast is the bias, our will, and not God's. If the cable is cut, the ballast holds us. In proportion as we throw out the ballast, we fly upwards.

Before 1899.

THE COMMUNE AND THE WORLD

(From a letter to D. A. Khilkov)

The other day I received your letter, I). A., and I have just finished reading it again. I will try to answer its chief contents, as I understand them. What of it, if the communes have fallen to pieces? If we considered these communes to be a sample of how Christ's teaching ought to be realized in the world and of how the kingdom of God should be established upon earth, that would be terrible : then the falling to pieces of the commune would show the inadequacy of Christ's teaching; but thus the communes were not looked upon, either by us who were outside them, or by those who took part in them. (If any one looked upon them in this light, their falling to pieces would correct this false view, and so the falling to pieces is in this sense even useful.) These communes were a certain form of life which some people chose in their motion along the path indicated by Christ. Other people chose other forms (or other people were placed under different conditions), like you, I, Ge, and all men who travel on this path. And, as you yourself write, no matter how good separate settlements may be, they are good only so long as they are needed, – all forms, as forms, are of necessity certainly transient, like waves. If the communes have fallen to pieces, that was so only because the men who lived in them outgrew their integument and tore it. We can only rejoice at this. I now am writing partly about this, and in a letter I shall of course not be able to express everything clearly, but I will try, and you help me, – understand even what is not clearly expressed.

Christianity is a motion along a path indicated by Christ, – by means of the truth toward the full perfection of the heavenly Father. And Christianity is the more Christianity, the more it is motion, the more accelerated this motion is. Thus the chief of the publicans, Zacchaeus, who lived all in lust and suddenly decided to give, was at that moment more of a Christian than the disciples who asked what their rewards would be for their loyalty; the thief on the cross, the harlot, the publican, are more than the Pharisee. Every man, no matter on what low stage he may stand, may be a Christian, may move and accelerate this motion to infinity (observe that nothing touches us so much or gives us so much pleasure as these motions, when the sinner repents, – the lost sheep, the coin), and, no matter on what high stage of righteousness a man may be, he can stop moving, stop

being a Christian. Nothing arrests the motion so much as a certain form, as self-observation, as the consciousness of being at a certain stage (indeed, this consciousness is the form where " the left hand does not know what the right is doing," and, " not fit for the kingdom of God is he that takes hold of the plough and looks back ").

Precisely this the churches have done. What is the church ? Read the Orthodox, the Catholic, and the Lutheran catechisms. They deny one another, and each of them asserts that it has the truth. Thus a strict, precise definition of the church is—men who assert of themselves that the comprehension of the truth and the fulfilment of it, as practised by them, are the only correct ones. But this is said by every man who recognizes the form chosen by him as the only regular one. I his tendency of men of recognizing the form as regular, though not approaching the cruelty of the church, is the chief impediment to Christianity, — it is friction. It is the problem of men who follow Christ to diminish this friction as much as possible. There are an endless number of forms for following in the path of Christ, just as there are an endless number of points in the line, and not one is more important than another. What is important is the rapidity of motion, and the rapidity of motion is in inverse proportion to the possibility of determining the points.

Again : you say that you do not like the word and conception of " self-perfection," and that you do not like perfection itself : it is too indeterminate and broad. 1

understand this. This is connected with the questions about the communes and forms, and this is what I have been thinking of it (the parable of the labourers in the vineyard who do not pay tribute and of the talents) : The true life is given to man under two conditions :

(1) that he may do good to men (but the good is one, and one only, — to increase love toward men, — to feed a hungry man, visit a sick man, and so forth, — all this is only for the purpose of increasing love in men), and (2)

that he should increase the power of love which is given to him. One conditions the other : good works, which increase love in men, are good only when in their performance I feel that love is being increased in me, when I do them lovingly, with emotion ; and love is increased in me

(I am being perfected), only when I do good works and evoke love in other men. Thus, if I do good works and remain cold, or, if I perfect myself and think that I am increasing love in myself, while this does not evoke love in other men (at times even provokes evil), that is not it. Only then do I know — and we all know — that it is it, when I love more and people, too, are filled with more love (by the way, this is also a proof that love is the one essence — one God in all of us — which, by discovering Him in ourselves discovers Him in everybody else, and vice versa).

Thus I think that every arrangement, every definition, every arrest of consciousness at any stage is the predominance of care about increasing love in oneself, a self-perfection without good works.

The grossest form of this kind is the standing on a pillar, but every form is more or less such a standing. Every form separates us from men, consequently also from the possibility of good works and from the incitement of love in them. Such also are the communes, and this is their defect, if we recognize them as a constant form. The standing on a pillar and the going away into the wilderness and the living in a commune may be necessary to men for a time, but as a constant form they are an obvious sin and madness. It is impossible to live a pure, saintly life on a pillar or in a commune, because man is deprived of one-half of life, that of a communion with the world, without which his life has no meaning. To live thus constantly, it is necessary for us to deceive ourselves, because it is too clear that, as it is impossible in a turbid stream by any chemical process to separate a circle of pure water, so it is impossible amidst the whole world living by violence for the sake of lust to live alone or alone to be a saint. It is necessary to buy or rent land or a cow, and it is necessary to enter into relations with the external, non-Christian world. These relations are most important and necessary. It is impossible and unnecessary to go away from them. It is possible only to deceive oneself. The whole business of a disciple of Christ is to establish the most Christian relations with this world.

Imagine that all men who understand the teaching of truth as we do should assemble and settle on an island. Would that be life? And consider that the whole world, all men, are involuntarily going in the same direction with us, and that the men who understand the truth as we do, who are standing (now) on the same step, are scattered all over the world, and that we have the joy of meeting them and knowing them and their labours. Is not that better? Indeed it is.

You say that it is impossible to love Herod. I do not know. But I know, and so do you, that we must love him; I know, and so do you, that if I do not love him, I am pained, I have no life (I John iii. 14), and so we must try and we can work.

I imagine a man who has lived all his life in love amidst those who love him, but who does not love Herod, and another, who has used all his efforts for loving Herod and has remained indifferent to those who loved him and for twenty years did not love him, but in the twenty-first year came to love Herod and made Herod love him and other men, and I do not know who is better.
" For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? "

1899 (?).

CONCERNING THE CONGRESS OF PEACE

(Letter to certain Swedes)

Gentlemen : – The idea expressed in your beautiful letter, that universal disarmament may be attained in the easiest and most certain way by means of the refusal of separate individuals to take part in military service, is quite correct. I even think that it is the only way of freeing men from the ever growing terrible calamities of militarism. But your idea that the question about substituting public works for military service, in the case of those persons who refuse to do it, may be considered at the Conference about to be held at the request of the emperor, seems to me quite faulty, if for no other reason than that the Conference can be nothing else but one of those hypocritical institutions, whose purpose is not the attainment of peace, but, on the contrary, the concealment from men of that one means for attaining universal peace which advanced people are beginning to see.

The Conference, they say, will have for its aim, if not the abolition of armaments, at least the cessation of the increase of them. It is assumed that at this Conference the representatives of the governments will agree not to increase their armaments. If that is so, there involuntarily arises the question as to how the governments of those states will act, which during the meeting of the Conference happen to be weaker than their neighbours. It is not very likely that such governments will agree to remain even in the future in the same weaker condition than that of their neighbours. But if they should agree to remain in this weaker condition, through their firm faith in the decrees of the Conference, they could be weaker still and not spend anything on the army.

But if the business of the Conference shall consist in equalizing the military powers of the states and in keeping them equal, and it should be possible to attain such an impossible equalization, there involuntarily arises the question : why need the governments stop at their present armaments, and why do they not descend to lower ones ? Why is it necessary for Germany, France, or Russia to have, let us say, one million soldiers, and not five hundred thousand, or ten thousand, or one thousand ? If it is possible to diminish, why not reduce it to the minimum, and finally in place of the armies put up champions, David and Goliath, and decide international affairs according to the result of the fight of the champions ?

They say that the conflicts of the governments will be decided by a court of arbitration. But, to say nothing of the fact that the affairs will not be decided by the representatives of the nations, but by the representatives of the governments, when there would be no guarantee that the solutions would be correct, – who will execute the sentence of the court ? – The armies. – Whose armies? – Those of all the powers. – But the forces of these powers are not equal. Who, for example, will on the Continent enforce the decision which, let us say, will be disadvantageous for Germany, Russia, or France, which are united in an alliance ? Or who will on the sea enforce a decision which is opposed to the interests of England, America, or France ? The decision of the court of arbitration against the military violence of the states will be executed by means of military violence ; that is, that which is to be limited will itself

be a means of limitation. To catch a bird, it is necessary to throw salt upon its tail.

I remember, during the siege of Sevastopol, I was one day sitting with the adjutants of Saken, the commander of the garrison, when into the waiting-room came S. S.

Crusov, a very brave officer, a very odd fellow, and at the same time one of the best European chess-players of the time. He said that he had some business with the general. An adjutant took him to the general's cabinet.

Ten minutes later Urusov passed by us with a dissatisfied face. The adjutant who saw him out returned to us and told us on what business Crusov had come to see Saken.

He came to Saken to ask him to challenge the English to play a game of chess in the front trench, at the van of the Fifth Bastion, which had several times passed from hand to hand and had cost several hundreds of lives.

There is no doubt but that it would have been much better to play chess in the trench than to kill people.

But Saken did not consent to Crusov's proposition, as he knew quite well that it would be possible to play chess in the trench only if there existed a mutual confidence in the parties that the condition would be carried out. But the presence of armies standing in front of the trench, and of the cannon directed upon it, proved that no such confidence existed. So long as there were armies on either side, it was evident that the matter would be decided with bayonets, and not with a game of chess. The same is true of international questions. For them to be decided by a court of arbitration, it is necessary for the powers to have absolute confidence that they will mutually carry out the decision of the court. If the confidence exists, there is no need whatsoever of the armies. But if there are armies, it is clear that this confidence is lacking, and the international questions cannot be decided in any other way than by force of arms. So long as there are any armies, they are needed, not only for the purpose of making new acquisitions, as now all the states are doing,

— some in Asia, some in Africa, and some in Europe,—

but also for the purpose of retaining by force what has been acquired by force. Only by conquering is it possible to acquire and retain by force. What always conquers is the gros battailions. And so, if a government has an army, it has to have as much as possible of it. In this does its duty consist. If a government does not do so, it is unnecessary. A government may do a great deal in its internal affairs, — it may set free, enlighten, enrich its people, it may construct roads and canals, colonize deserts, arrange public works, but there is one thing it cannot do, namely that for which the Conference is called, that is, it cannot reduce its military strength.

But if the aim of the Conference, as is to be seen from the late explanations, shall consist in eliminating from use such instruments of destruction as present themselves to people as specially cruel (why not try, among the number and above all else, to eliminate at

the same time the seizure of letters, the forgery of telegrams, and espionage, and all those horrible rascalities which form a necessary condition of military defence ?), such a prohibition of using in the struggle such means as are at hand is fully as possible as the injunction given to people who are fighting for their lives, during the fight not to touch the most sensitive parts of their adversaries. And why are a wound and death from an explosive bullet any worse than a wound caused by the simplest kind of a bullet or a splinter in a very sensitive spot, the sufferings from which reach the utmost limit, and from which death ensues as from any other weapon ?

It is incomprehensible how mentally sound adults can seriously express such strange ideas.

Let us assume that the diplomatists, who devote all their lives to lying, are so used to this vice and constantly live and act in such a dense atmosphere of lying that they themselves do not notice all the senselessness and mendacity of their propositions ; but how can private individuals, honest individuals, – not those who, in order to fawn before the emperor, laud his ridiculous proposition, – help seeing that nothing can be the result of this Conference but the confirmation of the deception in which the governments keep their subjects, as was the case with Alexander I.'s Holy Alliance?

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The Conference will have for its purpose, not the establishment of peace, but the concealment from men of the only means of freeing them from the calamities of war, which consists in the refusals of separate individuals to take part in military murder, and so the Conference can in no way take this question under advisement.

All those who from conviction refuse to do military service will always be treated by every government as the Dukhobors have been treated by the Russian government. At the same time that it proclaimed to the whole world its quasi-peaceable intentions, it secretly from all tormented, ruined, and expelled the most peaceable people of Russia, only because they were not peaceable in words, but in deeds, and so refused to do military service. Just so, though less harshly, have acted all the European governments in cases of refusal to do military service. Thus have acted the Austrian, Prussian, French, Swedish, Swiss, Dutch governments, nor can they act differently.

They cannot act differently, because, ruling their subjects by a force which is formed by a disciplined army, they can nowise leave the diminution of this force, and consequently of their power, to the accidental moods of private individuals, the more so that, in all likelihood, as soon as work could by all men be substituted for military service, the vast majority of people (nobody likes to kill and to be killed) would prefer work to military service, and very soon there would be such a great mass of labourers and such a small number of soldiers, that there would not be any one to compel the

labourers to work.

The liberals, socialists, and other so-called representative people, who are enmeshed in their own wordiness, may imagine that their speeches in the Chambers and meetings, their unions, strikes, and pamphlets are very important phenomena, and that the refusals of separate individuals to do military service are unimportant phenomena, which it is not worth while to consider ; but the governments know very well what for them is important, and what not, and the governments gladly allow all kinds of liberal and radical speeches in the Reichstags and labour-unions, and socialistic demonstrations, and even themselves make believe that they sympathize with all that, knowing that these phenomena are very useful for them, in that they divert the attention of the masses from the chief and only means of liberation ; but they will never openly permit any refusals to do military service or refusals to pay taxes for military service (that is one and the same thing), because they know that such refusals, in laying open the deception of the governments, undermine their power at the root.

So long as the governments will rule their nations by force and will wish, as they now do, to acquire new possessions (the Philippines, Port .Arthur, and so forth) and to retain those that have been acquired (Poland, Alsace, India, Algiers, and so forth), they will not only never reduce the armies, but will, on the contrary, constantly increase them.

The other day the news was announced that an American regiment had refused to go to Iloilo. This news is given out as something surprising. But the surprise is, why such phenomena are not constantly repeated : how could all those Russian, German, French, Italian, American people, who have fought of late, at the will of strangers whom for the most part they do not respect, have gone to kill people of another nation, and to subject themselves to sufferings and death ?

It would seem to be so clear and so natural for all these men to come to their senses, if not at the time when they were being enlisted, at least at the last moment, when they are being led against the enemy,— to stop, throw down their guns, and call out to their adversaries to do the same.

This would seem to be so simple, so natural, that all people ought to act like that. But if people do not act thus, this is due to the fact that the people believe their governments, which assure them that all those burdens which men carry for the sake of war are imposed upon them for their own good. All the governments have with striking impudence always asserted that all those military preparations, and even the wars themselves which they wage, are needed for the sake of peace. Now they are making in this field of hypocrisy and deception a new step, which consists in this, that those very governments, for the existence of which armies and wars are necessary, make it appear that they are busy finding measures for the reduction of the armies and the abolition of wars.

The governments want to assure the nations that the separate individuals have no cause for troubling themselves about their liberation from war: the governments themselves will so fix it in their conferences that the armies will at first be reduced and later finally abolished.
But that is an untruth.

The armies can be reduced and abolished only against the will, and not with the will, of the governments. The armies will be reduced and abolished only when public opinion will brand the people who from fear or advantage sell their liberty and take up a position in the ranks of murderers, called the army ; and will recognize the people,— now unknown and condemned,— who, in spite of all persecutions and sufferings borne by them, refuse to give their liberty into the hands of other men and again to become instruments of murder, to be what they are,— champions and benefactors of humanity.

Only then will the armies at first be reduced and then entirely be abolished, and a new era will begin in the life of humanity.

This time is at hand.

And so I think that your idea that the refusals to do military service are phenomena of immense importance, and that they will free humanity from the calamities of militarism is quite correct ; but that your idea that the Conference will contribute anything toward it is quite faulty. The Conference can only divert the people's attention from the one means of salvation and liberation.

Moscow, January, 1899.

LETTER TO A. V. VLASOV1

Respected Brother, Andrey Vasilevich:—I have received your letter and was glad to learn of you and your faith. Your having suffered from the worldly authorities proves that you are travelling on Christ's road. Every man who walks on that road cannot avoid falling in with the prince of this world. A light is not put under a bushel, but so that it may be seen by others. But the prince of the world cannot admit this, because Christ's light reveals his evil deeds. Only those serve God's work who, establishing His kingdom upon earth, arraign the deceptions of the prince of the world and suffer persecution for it. May God help you for it.

I fully agree with you as to what you say in your letter, and rejoiced in spirit, reading it. I should like to give you one piece of advice, and that is, in your arraignment do not lose your love for your brother; and also this, in the arraignment of the lie put more stress and reliance on reason and love than on verses from the Scripture. The Scripture is the work of human hands,— in it there may be errors, and everybody may interpret it, especially

Revelation, as he pleases; but reason is given directly by God and to all,— Tartars, Chinamen, and all other nations have one and the same, — and it is impossible not to believe in reason. Only those who do not wish to know the truth do not believe in it. I

IV\Asov's personality and the contents of his letter to Tolstoy are faithfully rendered in Part III., Chapters XXI and XXV of the Jiesv.rrf'ctio.

enclose a few articles on faith, as I understand it : two of them, Christ's Commandments and How to Read the Gospel, were composed by me ; the others are not mine, but I agree with them. Your loving brother.

1889.

LETTER TO A CORPORAL

You wonder how it is soldiers are taught that it is right to kill men in certain cases and in war, whereas in the Scripture, which is acknowledged to be sacred by those who teach this, there is nothing resembling such a permission, but there is the very opposite, — a prohibition to commit murder and even any insult against men, a prohibition to do to others what one does not wish to have done to oneself ; you ask me whether this is not a deception. and if so, for whose advantage it is practised.

Yes, it is a deception, which is practised in favour of those who are accustomed to live by the sweat and blood of other people, and who for this purpose have been distorting Christ's teaching, which was given men for their good, but which now, in its distorted form, has become the chief source of all the calamities of men.

This happened in the following way: The government and all those men of the upper classes who adhere to the government and live by the labours of others have to have means for controlling the labouring masses ; the army is such a means. The defence against foreign enemies is only an excuse. The German government frightens its nation with the Russians and the French ; the French frightens its nation with the Germans ; the Russian frightens its nation with the Germans and the French, and so it is with all the nations; but neither the Germans, nor the Russians, nor the French wish to fight with their neighbours and with other nations ; they prefer to live in peace with them and are afraid of war more than of anything in the world. But, to have an excuse in their control of the labouring masses, the governments and the upper idle classes act like a gipsy, who whips his horse around the corner and then pretends that he is not able to hold it back. They stir up their people and another government, and then pretend that for the good or for the defence of their nation they cannot help but declare war, which again is profitable for the generals, officers, officials, merchants, and, in general, for the wealthy classes. In reality, war is only an inevitable consequence of the existence of the armies ; but the

armies are needed by the governments merely for the purpose of controlling their own labouring masses.

It is a criminal business, but the worst thing about it is this, that the governments, to have a rational foundation for their control of the masses, are obliged to pretend that they are professing the highest religious teaching known to men, that is, the Christian, and in this teaching educate their subjects. This teaching is in its essence opposed, not only to every murder, but even to every violence, and so, to be able to control the masses and be considered Christian, the governments had to distort Christianity and to conceal its true meaning from the masses and thus to deprive men of the good which Christ brought to them.

This distortion of Christianity took place long ago, in the time of the malefactor, Emperor Constantine, who for this was canonized a saint. All the subsequent governments, especially our own Russian government, have tried with all their strength to maintain this distortion and not to allow the masses to see the true meaning of Christianity, because, if they saw it, they would come to understand that the governments, with their taxes, soldiers, prisons, gallows, and cheating priests, are not only no pillars of Christianity, such as they pretend to be, but its greatest enemies.

In consequence of this distortion there result those deceptions which startled you so much, and all those terrible calamities from which the masses suffer.

The masses are crushed, robbed, impoverished, ignorant, – they are dying out. Why ? Because the land is in the hands of the rich ; because the masses are enslaved in factories, in plants, in their daily occupations ; because they are fleeced for the taxes, and the price for their labour is lowered, and the price for what they need is raised. How can they be freed? Shall the land again be taken away from the rich ? But if that is done, the soldiers will come, will kill oft* the rioters, and will lock them up in prisons. Shall the factories, the plants, be taken away ? The same will happen. Stick out in a strike ? But that will never happen, – the rich can stick out longer than the labourers, and the armies will always be on the side of the capitalists. The masses will never get away from that want in which they are held, so long as the armies shall be in the power of the ruling classes.

But who are the armies, which hold the masses in this slavery ? Who are those soldiers who will shoot at the peasants who have taken possession of the land, and at the strikers, if they do not disperse, and at the smugglers, who import wares without paying the revenue, – who will put into prisons and keep there those who refuse to pay the taxes? These soldiers are the same peasants whose land has been taken away, the same strikers, who want to raise their wages, the same payers of the taxes, who want to be freed from these payments.

Why do these men shoot at their brothers ? Because it has been

impressed upon them that the oath which they are compelled to take upon entering military service is obligatory for them, and that they may not kill men in general, but may kill them by command of the authorities, that is, the same deception which startled so much is practised upon them. But here arises the question, – how can people of sound mind, who frequently know the rudiments and are even educated, believe in such a palpable lie? No matter how little educated a man may be, he none the less cannot help knowing that Christ did not permit any murder, but taught meekness, humility, forgiveness of offences, love of enemies; he cannot help but see that on the basis of the Christian teaching he cannot make a promise in advance that he will kill all those whom he is commanded to kill.

The question is, how can people of sound mind believe, as all those who are now doing military service have believed, in such an obvious deception? The answer to the question is this, that people are not deceived by this one deception alone, but have been prepared for it from childhood by a whole series of deceptions, a whole system of deceptions, which is called the Orthodox Church, and which is nothing but the coarsest kind of idolatry.

According to this faith men are taught that God is triune, that besides this triune God there is also a heavenly queen, and that in addition to this queen there are also all kinds of saints, whose bodies have not decayed, and that in addition to the saints there are also the images of the Gods and of the queen of heaven, before which tapers have to be placed and prayers made with the hands, and that the most important and holy thing on earth is the pap which the priest makes on Sundays back of the partition out of wine and bread, that after the priest has whispered something over this, the wine will not be wine and the bread will not be bread, but the blood and body of one of the triune Gods, and so forth. All that is so stupid and senseless that it is absolutely impossible to understand what it all means, and, indeed, those who teach this faith command us not to understand, but to believe it; and the people, who have been trained from childhood to believe this, believe any senseless thing that they may be told.

But after men are so stultified that they believe that God is hanging in the corner or is sitting in the piece of pap which the priest is giving them in a spoon, that it is useful for this life and for the life to come to kiss a board or the relics and to place tapers before them, they are called upon to do military service, and there they are deceived any way they are to be deceived, by being compelled first of all to swear on the Gospel (which prohibits swearing)

that they will do what is prohibited in this Gospel, and then, by teaching them that it is not a sin to kill men by the command of the authorities, but that it is a sin not to obey the authorities, and so forth.

Thus the deception of the soldiers, which consists in this, that they are impressed with the idea that it is possible without sinning to kill men by command of the authorities, does not stand alone, but is connected with a whole system of deceptions, without which this

particular deception would be ineffective.

Only a man who is completely stupefied by that false faith, called Orthodox, which is given out to him as being Christian, is able to believe that it is no sin for a Christian to enter the army, promising blindly to obey any man who will consider himself higher in rank, and, at the command of another man, to learn to kill and to commit this most terrible crime, which is prohibited by all the laws.

A man who is free from the deception of the so-called Orthodox, pseudo-Christian faith will never believe this.

For this reason the so-called sectarians, that is, the Christians who reject the doctrine of Orthodoxy and acknowledge Christ's teaching, as it is expounded in the Gospels, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount, never fall a prey to this deception, and have always refused to do military service, recognizing it as incompatible with Christianity and preferring to suffer all kinds of tortures, as is now done by hundreds and thousands of men, – in Russia by the Dukhobors and Milkers: in Austria by the Nazarenes ; in Sweden, Switzerland, and Germany by the Evangelists. The government knows this and so follows nothing with such terror and attention as that the general ecclesiastic deception, without which its power is not possible, shall be practised from earliest childhood on all the children and shall be constantly maintained in such a way that not one man can escape it. The government permits anything, drunkenness and debauchery (it not only permits, but even encourages drunkenness and debauchery, – it helps in the stultification), but it is violently opposed to allowing men to free themselves from the deception and free others from it.

The Russian government practises this deception with particular cruelty and harshness. It commands all its subjects, threatening them with punishment in case of non-compliance, to have all their children baptized, while they are babes, into the deceptive, so-called Orthodox faith. AVhen the children are baptized, that is, are considered Orthodox, they are, under threat of criminal prosecution, prohibited from discussing the faith into which they were baptized without their will, and for such a discussion of the faith, as well as for departing from it and passing over to another faith, they are subject to punishments.

So it cannot be said of all the Russians that they believe in the Orthodox faith, – they do not know whether they believe or not, because they were turned into that faith when they were still babes, and because they hold to this enforced faith through fear of punishment. All the Russians are caught into Orthodoxy through fell deception and are kept in it through cruel violence.

By making use of the power which it has, the government produces and maintains the deception, and the deception maintains its power.

And so the only means for freeing men from all the calamities

consists in freeing them from that false faith which is inculcated upon them by the government, and in impressing upon them the true Christian teaching, which is concealed from them by this false doctrine. The true Christian teaching is very simple, clear, and accessible, as Christ Himself has said. But it is simple and accessible only when a man is free from that lie in which we are all brought up, and which is given out to us as divine.

It is impossible to fill a vessel with what is important, if it is already filled with what is useless. It is necessary first to pour out what is useless. Even so it is with the acquisition of the true Christian teaching. We must first understand that all the stories about how God created the world six thousand years ago, and how Adam sinned, and how the human race fell, and how the son of God and God Himself, born of a virgin, came into the world and redeemed it, and all the fables of the Bible and of the Gospel, and all the lives of the saints, and the stories of miracles and relics, are nothing but a coarse mixing up of the superstitions of the Jewish nation with the deceptions of the clergy. Only for a man who is completely free from these deceptions can the simple and clear teaching of Christ, which demands no interpretations and is self-comprehensible, be accessible and comprehensible.

This teaching says nothing about the beginning or the end of the world, nor of God and His intentions, in general nothing about what we cannot know and need not know, but speaks only of what a man has to do in order to be saved, that is, in order in the best manner possible to pass the life into which he has come in this world, from his birth to his death. For this purpose we need only treat others as we wish to be treated. In this alone does the law and the prophets consist, as Christ has said.

To do so, we need no images, no relics, no divine services, no priests, no sacred histories, no catechisms, no governments, but, on the contrary, a liberation from all that, — because only the man who is free from those fables which the priests give out to him as the only truth, and who is not bound to other people by promises to act as they want him to act, can treat others as he wishes to be treated by them. Only in that case will a man be able to do, not his own will, nor that of others, but the will of God.

But the will of God consists, not in fighting and oppressing others, but in recognizing all men as brothers and serving one another.

Such are the thoughts that your letter evoked in me. I shall be very glad if they shall contribute to the elucidation of the questions in which you are interested.

1899.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

(On the Transvaal War)

... It gives me pleasure to answer you, because your pamphlets are written very well and very sincerely, with the exception of the third, in regard to which I agree with your relatives. That pamphlet is weak, not because it is too blunt, but because it does not bring out with sufficient clearness the repellent features of one of the most disgusting, if not comical, representatives of emperorship, - William II.

But no matter how well your articles are written, I do not agree with their subject matter ; I do not exactly disagree, but I cannot condemn that which you condemn.

If two men having got drunk in an inn come to blows or while playing cards, I will not make up my mind to condemn one of them, no matter how convincing the proofs of the other may be. The cause of the bad acts of one or the other does not by any means lie in the justice of one of them, but in this, that, instead of working or resting calmly together, they found it necessary to drink wine and play cards in the inn. Similarly, when I am told that in any kind of a war which has broken out it is exclusively one party that is to blame, I can never agree to this. We may admit that one side has acted worse, but the discussion as to which side acts worse does in no way explain the underlying cause of why such a terrible, cruel, and inhuman phenomenon as war is taking place.

The causes are quite obvious to any man who does not shut his eyes, as in the present Transvaal War so also in all the late wars. There are three such causes: (1) the unequal distribution of property, that is, the robbing of one class of people by another, (2) the existence of a military class, that is, of people educated and destined for murder, and (3) the false, for the most part consciously deceptive, religious teaching, in which the young generations are forcibly educated.

And so I think that it is not only useless, but even harmful to look for the cause of wars in a Chamberlain, a William, and so forth, thus concealing from ourselves the true causes, which are much nearer, and in which we ourselves take part. We can only be indignant with a Chamberlain or a William, and scold them ; but our anger and scolding will only make bad blood for us, without changing the course of events : a Chamberlain and a William are blind tools of forces which lie far behind them. They act as they must act, and cannot act otherwise. The whole of history is a series of just such acts of all the political persons as the Transvaal War, and so it is quite useless and even impossible to be angry at them and condemn them, when we see the true causes of their activity and when we feel that we are ourselves to blame for this or that activity of theirs, according to how we look upon the three fundamental causes which I have mentioned.

So long as we are going to enjoy exclusive wealth, while the masses of the nation are crushed by labour, there will always be wars for markets, for gold fields, and so forth, which we need in order to

maintain our exclusive wealth. So much the more inevitable will be the wars, so long as we are going to take part in the military class and will permit its existence, – if we will not struggle with all our strength against it. We either ourselves serve in the military caste, or recognize it not only as indispensable, but also as praiseworthy, and then, when war breaks out, we accuse some Chamberlain of it, and so forth. Above all else, there will be war, so long as we are going to preach, and even without indignation and provocation to permit, that corruption of Christianity, which is called the ecclesiastic Christianity, and under which is possible a Christ-loving army, the blessing of cannon, and the recognition of war as Christian and just.

We teach our children this religion and ourselves profess it, and then say either that Chamberlain or Ki tiger is to blame, because people are killing one another.

For that reason I do not agree with you and cannot rebuke the blind tools of ignorance and evil, but see the cause in manifestations in which I myself can contribute to the diminution or increase of evil. To contribute to the fraternal equalization of property, to make the least use of the privileges which have fallen to my share; in no way to take part in military affairs, to destroy that hypnosis by means of which people, turning into hired murderers, think that they are doing a good thing, if they serve in the army; and chiefly, to profess the rational Christian teaching, trying one's best to destroy that cruel deception of the false Christianity in which the young generations are forcibly brought up, – in this threefold work, it seems to me, lies the duty of every man who wishes to serve the good and who is justly provoked at that terrible war, which provoked you, too.

Moscou:, Découler 1899.

ON SUICIDE

The question as to whether a man has the right to kill himself is incorrectly put. There can be no question as to right. If he can, he has the right. I think that the possibility of killing oneself is a safety-valve. With this possibility a man has no right (here the expression

" to have right " is in place) to say that life is intolerable to him. It is impossible for me to live, so I will kill myself, and then there will be no one to complain of the intolerableness of life. Man is given the opportunity to kill himself, and so he can (has the right to) kill himself, and he continually makes use of it, killing himself in duels, in war, by means of dissipation, whiskey, tobacco, opium, and so forth. The question can be only as to whether it is rational and moral (the rational and the moral always coincide) to kill oneself.

No, it is not rational; it is just as irrational as to cut off the suckers of a plant which you want to kill: the plant will not perish, but will only grow irregularly.

Life is not destructible, – it is outside time and space, and so death can only change the form, cut off its manifestation in this life. And having cut it off in this world, I, in the first place, do not know whether its manifestation in another world will be more agreeable to me, and, in the second place, I deprive myself of the possibility of learning and acquiring for my ego everything which it could acquire in this world. Besides, and above all else, it is irrational, because, interrupting my life, – because it seems disagreeable to me, – I only show that I have a perverse conception of the destiny of this life, by assuming that its destiny is my enjoyment, whereas its destiny is, on the one hand, personal perfection, on the other, a ministration to that work which is accomplished by the whole life of the world. For the same reason suicide is immoral : life is given to man in its entirety, and he is given the possibility of living to a natural death, only on condition of his ministration to the life of the world, and he, making use of life only to the extent to which it is agreeable to him, refuses to serve the world with it, the moment it becomes disagreeable to him, whereas, in all probability, this ministration began at the very moment when life became unpleasant. Every work at first appears unpleasant.

In Optin Cloister a paralyzed monk, who had the use of only his left arm, lay for more than thirty years on the Hour. The doctors said that he must suffer very much, but he not only did not complain of his condition, but constantly making the sign of the cross, looking at the images, and smiling, expressed his gratefulness to God and joy at that spark of life which was glowing within him. Tens of thousands of visitors saw him, and it is hard to imagine all the good which spread over the world from this man, who was deprived of every possibility of work. No doubt this man did more good than thousands and thousands of healthy people, who imagine that they are serving the world in various institutions.

So long as there is life in man, he can perfect himself and serve the world. But he can serve the world only by perfecting himself, and he can perfect himself only by serving the world.

1900 (?).

A MESSAGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(From a letter to Mr. Edward Garnett1)

When I read your letter it seemed to me impossible that I could send any message to the American people.

But thinking over it at night, it came to me that, if I had to address the American people, I should like to thank them for the great help I have received from their writers who flourished about the fifties. I would mention Garrison, Parker, Emerson, Ballou, and Thoreau, not as the greatest, but as those who, I think, specially

influenced me. Other names are Channing, Whittier, Lowell, Walt Whitman –a bright constellation, such as is rarely to be found in the literatures of the world.

And I should like to ask the American people why they do not pay more attention to these voices (hardly to be replaced by those of financial and industrial millionaires, or successful generals and admirals), and continue the good work in which they made such hopeful progress.

IQuoted, with the editor's permission, from The North American Review, April, 1901.

THREE LETTERS ON REASON, FAITH, AND PRAYER

1

. . . You ask what my Christian confession of faith consists in.

You have read the Short Exposition of the Gospel and so you know how I understand Christ's teaching.

But if you wish to know in what I see the chief meaning of the teaching, which I should like to transmit to all men, in which I should like to see all children educated, – I would say that it consists in this, that man came into the world, not by his own will, but by the will of Him who sent him into the world. But for man to know what He who sent him into the world wants of him, He implanted in him reason, by means of which man, if he only wants to, is always able to know the will of God, that is, what is wanted of him by Him who sent him into the world.

The Pharisees and scribes of our time always say that we must not believe our reason, because it will deceive us, but that we should believe them, and they will not deceive us. But they tell an untruth. If we are to believe men and, as it says in the Gospel, the traditions of men, we shall all creep in different directions, like blind puppies, and shall hate one another, as is really the case at present: a church Christian hates a Mohammedan, a Mohammedan hates a Christian, and the Christians hate one another, –an Orthodox hates a Catholic or an Ohl Believer, an Old Believer hates an Orthodox, and so forth.

But if we hold what reason dictates to us, we shall all unite, because reason is one and the same with all men, and nothing but reason unites men and does not binder the manifestation of mutual love, which is proper to men.

Reason unites us, not only with men who live at the same time with us, but also with those who lived thousands of years before, and with those who will live after us. Thus we make use of everything

produced by the reason of Isaiah, Christ, Buddha, Socrates, Confucius, and all other men who lived before us and believed in reason and served it. I do to others as you wish that others should do to you ; do not avenge evil done to you by men, but pay good for evil ; be continent, be chaste ; not only do not kill men, but be not even angry with them ; live in peace with all men, and many things more, – all that is the production of reason, and all that has been preached alike by Buddhists, and Confucianists, and Christians, and Taoists, and the Greek and Egyptian sages, and is preached by all good men of our time, and all agree upon all that.

And so, I repeat, the chief significance of the Christian teaching, in my opinion, consists in what is expressed in the Gospel in the parable about the labourers in the vineyard who were given the use of the vineyard, for which they were to pay the master, but they imagined that the vineyard was their own ; and in the parable about the talents. The meaning is this, that men must do the will of Him who sent them into life, and this will consists in this, that men, as is said in another place, should be as perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, that is, should as much as possible approach this higher perfection.

That God's will is only this we are also shown by our reason, and we are shown this so clearly that there can be no discussion about it, and no doubt. Any man who will think about it cannot help but see that in all affairs of life a man may meet and does meet obstacles, and only in one thing does a man encounter no obstacles, – in his desire to perfect himself, to purify his soul from evil, and to do good to everything living. Nor is it stopped, or impaired, or interfered with by death, which stops, impairs, and deprives of meaning every other worldly matter. Death does not stop or impair this matter, because a man who does the will of Him who sent him, knowing that the work done by him is needed by the Master, calmly does it here so long as he has the strength to do it, and he knows that death does not destroy him, nor his relation to the Master, and that there, though in a different form, he will be in dependence on the Master and will have the same joy of a greater and ever greater participation in the life and the work of the Master, that is, God.

Thus do I understand Christ's teaching, and thus I should like to see all men understand it and the children brought up, so that they may not take upon faith what they are told about God and about life, but may believe what they believe, not because this is given out as the utterances of the prophets and of Christ, but because their reason tells them so. Reason is older and more reliable than all Scriptures and traditions, – it existed even before there were any traditions and Scriptures, and it is given to each of us directly from God.

The words of the Gospel that every sin will be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, in my opinion, have direct reference to the assertion that we must not trust reason. Indeed, if we do not trust reason, which is given us from God, whom shall we believe ?

Shall we believe those men who want to make us believe what is inconsistent with reason, which is given from God ? . . .

2

. . . You ask what can give a feeble, corrupt, and debauched man, such as we all are, amidst the temptations surrounding him on all sides, the strength to live a Christian life ?

Instead of answering, and before answering, this question, I will ask what it really means. We are so used to this question that it appears to us quite natural and intelligible, whereas it is not only not natural and not even intelligible, but, on the contrary, extremely surprising and strange for any sensible man who is not brought up in the superstitions of the church faith.

Why is it that a blacksmith who is forging iron, or a ploughman who is ploughing a field, does not ask where he shall find the strength for the achievement of the work undertaken by him, but does it to the best of his ability, errs and tries to correct his error, gets tired, stops, puts his work aside for awhile, rests himself, and again takes up his work ? Is not every slave of God who tries to live a Christian life in the same condition ? Even so a man, if he is sincere, will to the best of his ability live a Christian life, do the will of God, and, if he shall make mistakes, will mend his ways, and he will grow tired, and rest, and again take up the same business of his life, – approaching to the best of his ability the perfection of the heavenly Father which is pointed out to him.

The question as to where a man is to find the strength for a Christian life shows only that people have been assured that there are certain special means by means of which people may, without an hourly intensification of struggle, falls, repentance, risings, and again falls, and again risings, attain the necessary strength for a good, holy life. This superstition, that a man does not approach perfection by his own slow efforts, but is able to purify himself at once and become holy, is one of the most terrible and most harmful delusions, and it is this that is energetically preached by all the ecclesiastic faiths.

Some assure their disciples that by means of the sacraments of baptism, confession, and communion a man may free himself from sins; others assert that what saves a man from sins is his belief in redemption, in this, that Christ the God purified us with His blood. Either of them teach that we are also freed by supplicatory prayer to God about His forgiving us our sins and making us good, and not by our trying to become better.

This superstition is very harmful, because it includes a deception.

This deception, in the first place, is this, that a man may become entirely pure and holy, whereas this is impossible for a live man. A man cannot be perfect and sinless, – he can only more or less approach perfection, basing on this approach the whole meaning of his life. (I even think that life after death will consist, though

in an entirely different form, in the same approach to perfection.) In this personal effort at perfection does the whole meaning and joy of life consist. And so, if perfection were to be attained by external means, we should be deprived of the very essence of life.

The deception, in the second place, is this, that man's forces are drawn away from what he ought to do, – to work over himself, – and are directed upon what he ought not to do. For us to depend on this, that the sacraments, or the belief in redemption, or prayer will contribute to our perfection, is the same as though a blacksmith, with iron and hammer in his hands, and having an anvil and a hot fire, should, instead of striking the iron, be trying to find a means for forging it, or praying to God to give him strength for work.

We could pray to God and try to invent means for perfecting ourselves, only if certain obstacles were put in our way and we ourselves did not have the strength to overcome them. In the matter of perfection, or of the Christian life, or of the fulfilment of God's will, God does not demand of us what we cannot do, but, on the contrary, has seen to it that we have everything we need for the fulfilment of His will.

We are here, in this world, as in a hostelry, in which the master has arranged everything which we, the travellers, need, and has gone away, leaving instructions as to how we should act in this temporary refuge. Everything we need is at hand; so what means are we to discover and what are we to ask about? All we have to do is to fulfil what we are prescribed to do. Even so it is in the spiritual world, – everything we need is given to us, and the rest depends upon us.

Of course, if we want to be saints at once, or if we wish to feel ourselves justified, and, besides, rich, – if we wish that we and our friends should never grow ill or die, that we may always have good crops, and that our enemies may be destroyed, – we must ask God for all those things, just as they ask for these things in our churches. But God has intended nothing of the kind for us: He not only has not prescribed to us to be righteous and sinless, but, on the contrary, has given us life, the only meaning of which is that we should free ourselves from our sins and approach Him; and He has not intended us to be rich, without disease and immortal, but has given us trials, – poverty, diseases, the death of our friends, and our own death, – for the very purpose that we might not place all our life in wealth, health, and this temporal life, but might place it in the service of Him; and He has given us enemies, not that we might desire their ruin, but that we might learn to destroy the enemies with love; He has given us a law with which we fare well, if we fulfil it. Thus we have no reason to invent any special means of salvation or to ask God for anything. Everything we need is given to us, if we shall only follow the indications of our conscience and of God, as expressed in the Gospel.

In the third place, the deception is this, – and by this it is

harmful, – that men, having come to believe that they are not able with their own strength to do God's will and live well, stop working over themselves, and not only stop working, but also lose the possibility of perfecting themselves. A man need but assure himself that he cannot do what he should do, and his arms will drop, and he will indeed be unable to do what is necessary. Let a man convince himself that he is sick, and he will grow sick. Obsessed persons yell for the very reason that they believe they are obsessed. People who drink incontinently do not reform, because they are convinced that they cannot control themselves. There does not exist a more immoral and pernicious doctrine than that a man cannot perfect himself by his own efforts.

This reflection that for a good Christian life one's own efforts are not sufficient, but that some external force is needed, is precisely like the one according to which (1 wrote von about it in my first letter) reason does not suffice for the cognition of the truth, but external proofs are needed. There it is assumed in advance that there is something which can give a man strength to live a Christian life and do God's will ; and here it is assumed in advance that there exists something by which a man can know for certain that what is said to him is the undoubted truth. It is assumed that there exists a means for cognizing truth, the full and perfect truth, – outside of the personal effort of the mind. But that is as impossible as to see light without eyes. The truth is what is cognized through effort and cannot be cognized in any other way.

The truth which is cognized by human reason can never be perfect: it can only approach perfect truth. Thus the truth may be the highest truth accessible to man at a given time, but can never be perfect for all times, – the indubitable truth. No proposition can be such a perfect truth for all time, for this reason, if for no other, that life, both the life of all humanity and that of each individual, passes and even consists in the attainment of more and more perfect truth.

The perverse and insipid conception that human reason cannot with its own efforts approach truth is due to the same terrible superstition according to which a man cannot without any aid from without approach the fulfilment of God's will. The essence of this superstition is this, that the full, complete truth was revealed by God himself : for the Jews it was revealed on Mount Sinai, and later by various prophets ; for the Christians it was revealed by Christ, the apostles, ecumenical councils, the church ; for the Brahmins it was revealed in the Vedas ; for the Buddhists – in the Tripitaka ; for the Mohammedans– in the Koran. This superstition is terrible, in the first place, because it distorts the very conception of the truth ; in the second place, because, having once recognized as the indubitable truth all those insipidities and abominations which are accepted as God's revelation in the Scriptures, people are obliged still more to distort common sense, in order to justify all these abominations and insipidities ; and, in the third place, because, by recognizing the infallible external revelation as the source of truth, a man ceases to believe in the one means for recognizing the

truth, – the efforts of his mind. A man who acts thus does what a man would do in search of a path, if, instead of making every effort for the discovery of the path, he should close his eyes and entrust himself to the guidance of the first man offering to lead him.

We are told: "How can we believe our reason, since we see that men who are guided by reason err ? The men who are guided by reason, – the Protestants, –

break up into an endless number of denominations, and even one man, in entrusting himself to his reason, passes from one teaching to another. Consequently," we are told, " reason may err, and it is impossible to depend upon it." Why so ? When a man believes in something, and his reason does not show him anything more true, he knows what for him is the highest truth, and he is right ; then he learns a still higher truth, and he is again right in that he acknowledges it. Even so he is right when he recognizes a still higher and purer truth. That which is the highest, clearest, truest that a man can see or imagine to himself is for him the truth.

Very likely it would be very well and very desirable if all men recognized one and the same perfect truth all at once (though, if this happened, life would at once stop) ; but even if we admit that this would be desirable, not everything is done as we desire it. It may, most likely, seem desirable to irrational men that people should not be sick, or that there should be a means for curing all diseases, or that all people should speak one language ; but all that will not happen because we imagine that all men will be cured by our medicine, or that all men will speak and understand Russian. If we imagine this, we shall only make things worse for ourselves, just as we make things worse for ourselves if we imagine that the full and eternal truth is revealed to us in Scripture, in tradition, and in the church. It was possible to imagine that in the beginning of Christianity, when one faith seemed possible ; but in our time, when side by side we can see men of the most varied creeds, all of whom imagine that the full and eternal truth was revealed to them, and not to us, it is particularly stupid to imagine that we, who were born in our faith, and no others, are in possession of the full truth, even as this is imagined by the Buddhists, Mohammedans, Catholics, Taoists, and others. Such a false imagination is particularly harmful, because it disunites men more than anything else. Men ought to unite more and more, as Christ teaches and our reason and heart show to us, but such doctrines about revelation more than anything else disunite men.

People ought, besides, to understand that if a man believes in revelation, he does so only because reason tells him that he must believe in such or such a revelation, –

Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Christian. Whether we will it or not, no truth can enter a man's soul against his reason. Reason is like a sifter which is attached to the thresher and fan, so that no grain can be received, except through this sifter. It may be that dirt is passing through the bolter, but there is no other way for obtaining the grain. If we imagine that we can have pure grain without sifting, we shall be deceiving ourselves and shall feed on dirt

instead of bread, as is, indeed, the case with the churchmen.

Thus we must not imagine that everything is taking place as we want it to, but must understand that everything is done as established by God. But God has established human life in such a way that men cannot recognize the whole truth, but constantly approach it, and, in proportion as they understand the one truth more and more clearly, they approach each other more and more.

You also ask for my opinion as to Christ's personality, whether I regard Him as God; you ask me about His birth, about the life after death, about whom I mean by the Pharisees and the scribes, and about communion.

Christ I regard as a man like all of us ; to regard Him as God I consider the greatest blasphemy and an obvious proof of paganism. To recognize Christ as God is to renounce God.

Christ I regard as a man, but His teaching I consider divine, to the extent to which it expresses divine truths. I do not know a higher teaching. It has given me life, and I try to follow it as well as I can.

About the birth of Christ I know nothing, and I do not need to know.

About the life after death we know that it exists, that life does not end in death ; but it is not given to us to know what this life will be, and we do not need to know.

By the Pharisees I understand preeminently the clergy, by the scribes I understand the learned who do not believe, in God.

In regard to the eating of the body and the drinking of the blood. I think that this is a most unimportant passage in the Gospel, and that it signifies either the attainment of the teaching or a reminiscence, but in neither case is it of any importance, and in no case does it mean what the church fanatics understand by it. I have ex rounded my understanding of this passage as well as I cou d in my Short Exposition of the Gospel.

3

In my last letter I wrote to you on the uselessness of prayer, both as to the realization of our wishes in relation to the events of the external world, and also for the internal world, - for our perfection. I am afraid that through my fault you will not understand me as I should wish to be understood, and so I will add a few words about this subject,- namely, about prayer.

For external events : for this, that there should be rain, or that a man whom I love should live, or that I should be well and not die, - for this I cannot pray, because these events take place according to laws established by God once and for all, and in such a way that, if we act as we should, they are always beneficent for us. It is the

same as though a good man should build me a house with strong walls and a roof which protect me, and I should whimsically wish to expand or change the position of the walls and should ask for that.

For our inner perfection we cannot pray, because everything we need for our perfection has been given to us and we neither need nor can add anything to it.

But the fact that supplicatory prayer has no meaning does not mean that it is impossible and unnecessary to pray. On the contrary, I think that it is impossible to live well without prayer, and that prayer is a necessary condition of a good, calm, and happy life. In the Gospel we are shown how to pray and what a prayer should consist in.

In every man there is a spark of God, God's spirit,— every man is God's son. Prayer consists in this, that, having renounced everything worldly, everything which may distract my sentiments (the Mohammedans do well, when, upon entering a mosque or beginning to pray, they close their eyes and ears with their fingers), I evoke in myself the divine principle. The best way for doing this is to do what Christ teaches : to enter into the closet and to shut the door, that is, to pray in complete solitude, be it in the closet, in the forest, or in the field. A prayer consists in this, that, renouncing everything worldly, everything external, we evoke in ourselves the divine part of our soul, to transfer ourselves into it, by means of it to enter into communion with Him of whom it is a part, to recognize ourselves as God's slaves, and to scrutinize our soul, our acts, our desires according to the demands, not of the external conditions of the world, but of this divine part of the soul.

And such a prayer is not an idle emotion and excitation, such as are produced by congregational prayers with their singing, pictures, illumination, and sermons, but always helps life, by changing and directing it. Such a prayer is a confession, a verification of former acts, and an indication of the direction of future acts. Suppose I am insulted, and I foster ill-will toward a man and wish him evil, or do not wish to do him the good which I can do him ; or I have lost property or a dear friend ; or I live, acting contrary to my belief. If I do not pray as is proper, but continue to live among distractions, I am not freed from that painful feeling of ill-will for the man who has offended me ; even so the loss of property or of a dear friend will poison my life ; and, in getting ready to act contrary to the dictates of my conscience, I shall be agitated. * But if I verify myself with the aid of myself and of God, everything will be changed,— I will accuse myself and not my enemy, and will seek for an opportunity to do him good ; my losses I will accept as a trial, and I will endeavour with humility to bear them, and in this will I find my consolation ; and I shall be able to understand my acts ; I will not, as before, conceal from myself that disagreement between my life and my faith, but will, repenting, try to bring them to an agreement, and in this endeavour I shall find peace and joy.

But you will ask: "In what should a prayer consist?" Christ gave us a sample of a prayer in the Lord's Prayer, and this prayer, which reminds us of the essence of our life, which is, to be in the will of the Father and to fulfil it, and of our usual sins, – the condemnation of our brothers and our unforgivingness toward them, – and of the chief perils of our life, the temptations, remains until now the best and most complete of all the prayers which I know.

But, in addition to this prayer, a true, solitary prayer consists also of everything which in the words of other sages and saintly men, or in our own, takes our soul back to the recognition of our divine principle, to a more vivid and clear expression of the demands of our conscience, that is, to the divine nature.

A prayer is a scrutiny of our past and present acts according to the highest demands.

Thus I not only do not deny solitary prayer, which reestablishes the divinity of our soul, but even consider it a necessary condition of the spiritual, that is, of the true, life. What I deny is the supplicatory and congregational – the blasphemous – prayer, with its singing, images, tapers, and even performances.

I often wonder how this congregational and supplicatory prayer can exist among men who call themselves Christian, when Christ said distinctly and definitely that we should pray in solitude and that we must not ask for anything, because "before ye open your mouth, your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." I will tell you about myself, – not at all thinking that this is good for all men and that all men should do so, – that I have long ago accustomed myself to praying every day in the morning in solitude. And my daily prayer is as follows :

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." And after that I add from the Epistle of John :
"Thy name is love. God is love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. No man hath seen God at any time, but if we love one another, He dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. If a man say, I love God, and hate th his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ; for God is love."

"Thy kingdom come." And I add : "Seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. The kingdom of God is within you."

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." And with this I ask myself whether I truly believe that I am in God and God in me, and whether I believe that my life consists in increasing love in myself. I ask myself whether I am mindful of this, that to-day I live and tomorrow I am dead, and whether it is true that I do not want to

live for my personal desire and human glory, but only in order to do God's will. And I add Christ's words from the three gospels : "Not my will, but Thine be done ; and not what I will, but what Thou wilt, and not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"Give us this day our daily bread." I add: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Deny thyself, and take up thy cross daily, and follow me. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls ; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." I add: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

" And lead us not into temptation." I add : " Beware of temptations, – lust, ambition, ill-will, gluttony, fornication, human glory. I do not do thine alms in the presence of men, and let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Rejoice because they insult and shame you."

"But deliver us from evil." I add: "Beware of evil which cometh from the heart: evil thoughts, murder (every ill-will toward man), theft (the use of what you have not earned), fornication, adultery (even in thought), false witness, blasphemy." I conclude the prayer again with words from the Epistle of John : " We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Thus I pray every day, applying the words of this prayer to my acts and to my mental state, – at times with more soulfulness than at others.

Besides this prayer, I pray also when I am alone, – I read the thoughts of wise and holy men, not Christians and the ancients alone, and I think and search before God for that evil which is in my heart, and try to pluck it out.

I also try to pray in life, when I am with people, and I am seized with passions. I then try to remember what took place in my soul during my solitary prayer, and the more sincere my prayer was, the easier I withstand the evil.

That is all I wanted to tell you about prayer, so that you may not think that I deny it.

Moscow, January 8, 1901.

TO THE TSAR AND HIS ASSOCIATES Again murders, again street rioting, again there will be executions, again terror, false accusations, threats, and rage on one side, and again hatred, a desire for revenge, and a readiness for sacrifice on the other. Again all the Russians have divided into two hostile camps and commit and are getting ready to commit the greatest crimes.

It is very likely that the present agitation will be suppressed, though it is also possible that these soldiers, policemen, and officers of the army, upon whom the government relies so much, will comprehend that what they are compelled to do is the great crime of fratricide, and will refuse to obey. But even if the present agitation shall be suppressed, it cannot be put out, but will be fanned more and more in a secret form, and will inevitably sooner or later manifest itself with increased force and will produce still worse sufferings and crimes.

What is it for ? What is it for, since it is so easy to be freed from it ?

We turn to all of you who have power, from the Tsar, the members of the Imperial Council, the ministers, to the relatives, – the uncles, brothers, friends of the Tsar, – who are likely to have an influence upon him ; we do not turn to you as to enemies, but as to brothers, who ___whether you wish it or not – are inseparably connected with us in such a way that all the sufferings which we undergo reecho in you, the more painfully if you feel that you might have removed these sufferings and did not do so, – see to it that an end is put to this situation ' .

To you, or to the majority of you, it seems that all that is taking place because amidst the regular current of life there appear restless, dissatisfied people, who stir up the masses and interfere with this regular current, that it is only these people who are to blame for everything, that it is necessary to quiet and bridle these restless, dissatisfied people, and then everything will be well, and that nothing need be changed.

But if the whole matter were due to the restless and bad people, all that would be necessary to do would be to catch them and shut them up in prisons, or to execute them, and then all the agitation would come to an end.

But these people have for more than thirty years been caught, imprisoned, executed, deported by the thousand, and their number keeps increasing, and the dissatisfaction with the existing order of life not only keeps growing, but is spreading all the time and has taken hold of millions of the labouring people, a vast majority of the whole nation. It is evident that the dissatisfaction is not due to the restless and bad people, but to something else.

And you, governing men, need but for a minute take your attention away from the sharp struggle with which you have been busy, – stop thinking naïvely, as was expressed in the late circular of the minister of internal affairs, that " the police need only in time disperse the crowd, and shoot into it if it does not disperse, in order that all be calm and quiet," – you need only stop believing this, to be able to see clearly the cause which produces the dissatisfaction among the masses and finds its expression in agitations, which are constantly assuming wider and deeper dimensions.

The cause is this, that, in consequence of the unfortunate, accidental murder of the Tsar who freed the masses, committed by a small group of men, who falsely imagined that they served the nation in this way, the government decided to keep from going ahead by renouncing more and more the improper conditions of life under the despotic forms of government, and, imagining that salvation lay in those same coarse, obsolete forms, has not only not advanced in the last twenty years, in conformity with the general development and greater complexity of life, or been standing still, but has been going back, with this retrogressive motion more and more departing from the people and their demands.

Thus it is not the bad, restless people who are to blame, but you yourselves, the rulers, who do not wish to see anything but your own peace for the present moment.

It is not a question of defending yourselves at once against an enemy who wishes you evil, – no one wishes you any evil, – but, having come to see the cause of the dissatisfaction of society, of removing it. All people cannot be wishing for discord and hostility ; they always prefer to live in concord and love with their brothers.

But if they now are agitated and seem to be wishing you ill, this is so because you appear to them as that barrier which deprives not only them, but also the millions of their brothers, of the best possessions of man, – liberty and enlightenment.

For people to stop being agitated and attacking you, so little is needed, and this little is so needed for yourselves, so obviously will give you peace, that it would be remarkable if you did not do it.

Only very little is to be done. What you ought to do is this : In the first place, make the peasants in all their rights equal with all the other citizens, and so :

(a) Abolish the disconnected, stupid institution of County Council chiefs.

(1>) Abolish those special rules which are established for the determination of the relations of the labourers to the employers.

(r) Free the peasants from the oppression of the passports in going from place to place, and also from the quartering, transportation, and village police duties (tenmen, hundred-men) which lie exclusively upon the peasants.

(d) Free them from the unjust obligation of paying other people's debts in consequence of mutual bail, and also from the emancipation payments, which have long ago covered the value of the land purchased.

And (c) above all else, abolish the useless, unnecessary, disgraceful corporal punishment, which has been established only for

the most industrious, moral, and numerous class of people.

The equalization of the peasantry, which forms the vast majority of the people, in all its rights with the other classes is particularly important, because there can be no permanency and firmness in a social structure in which this majority does not enjoy equal rights with others, but exists in the form of slaves, who are weighed down with special, exclusive laws. Only with an equalization of the rights of the labouring majority with those of all the other citizens, and in its emancipation from disgraceful exceptions, can there be a firm structure of society.

In the second place, you must stop applying the so-called rules of increased protection, which does away with all the existing laws and turns the population over into the power of very frequently immoral, stupid, and cruel chiefs. The non-application of the increased protection is important, because this arrest of the actions of the general laws produces denunciations, and espionage, and encourages and provokes rude force, which is frequently employed against the labourers who are entering into conflicts with their masters and the landowners (nowhere are such tortures practised as where these rules are operative) ; but chiefly, because only thanks to this terrible measure have they begun more and more frequently to employ capital punishment, which more than anything else corrupts people, which is contrary to the Christian spirit of the Russian people, which heretofore was not recognized in our law, and which forms the greatest crime, forbidden alike by God and by man's conscience.

In the third place, you must destroy all the barriers in culture, education, and instruction. You must—

(a) Make no distinction between the persons of the different classes in admitting them to be educated, and so you must abolish all the prohibitions of reading, instruction, and books, which exist exclusively for the masses, as though all these things were injurious for them.

(ó) Admit to all the schools the persons belonging to all the nationalities and religions, not excepting the Jews, who for some reason are deprived of this right.

(<) Not interfere with the teachers when they carry on the instruction in those languages spoken by the children who attend school.

Above all else, (7) permit the foundation and conduct of all kinds of private schools, both lower and higher, by all persons who are desirous of devoting themselves to a pedagogical activity.

The emancipation of culture, education, and instruction from all the oppressions under which they suffer now is important, because it is only these restrictions which keep the labouring masses from freeing themselves from that ignorance which now serves the government as the main argument for the application of these restrictions to the

masses. The emancipation of the labouring classes from governmental interference in matters of education would give the masses a chance much more rapidly and usefully to acquire all that knowledge which they need, and not that which is obtruded upon them; and the permission granted to private individuals to open and conduct schools would do away with the constant agitations among the student body, who are dissatisfied with the management of the institutions in which they study now.

If there were no restriction in the foundation of free private schools, the young people who are dissatisfied with the orders in the governmental institutions of learning would go over to those private institutions which would answer their demands.

Finally, in the fourth place, and this is most important, you must abolish all the restrictions of religious freedom.

You must :

(a) Abolish all the laws by which every departure from the recognized state church is punished as a crime.

(b) Permit the opening and building of chapels, churches, and meeting-houses by the Old-ritualists, Baptists, Milkers, Stundists, and so forth.

(c) Permit religious gatherings and religious preaching to all the faiths.

(iZ) Not keep the people of the different faiths from bringing up their children in the confession which they regard as the true one.

It is necessary to do so, because, to say nothing of the truth, worked out by history and science and acknowledged by the whole world, that religious persecutions not only do not obtain their aim, but even produce a reverse action, by strengthening that which they intend to destroy, and to say nothing of this, that the interference of the temporal power in matters of religion produces the most harmful, and, therefore, the worst vice of hypocrisy, which Christ arraigned so vigorously, – the interference of the temporal power in matters of faith hampers both the individual person and the aggregate of men in their attainment of the highest good, – the union of men among themselves. But the union is not attained by a violent and impossible retention of men in the once acquired external confession of the one religious doctrine to which infallibility is ascribed, but only by the free motion of all humanity in its approximation to the one truth, which, therefore, is the only one that can unite men.

Such, we believe, are the most modest and practicable desires of the vast majority of the Russian society. The application of these measures will unquestionably pacify society, and will free it from those terrible sufferings and

(what is worse than sufferings) crimes, which will inevitably be committed on both sides, if the government will care* only for the

suppression of agitations, leaving their causes untouched.

We turn to all of you, – the Tsar, the ministers, the members of the Imperial Council, and the Tsar's nearest friends and advisers, in general to all people in power, – for help in the pacification of society and in its liberation from sufferings and crimes. We turn to you, not as to people of another camp, but as to our involuntary fellows in thought and feeling, and our brothers.

In a society of men who are bound together some cannot fare well, while others fare badly, especially if the majority fares badly. Now all can fare well only when the strongest, most industrious majority, upon which society holds itself, fares well.

Help, then, improve the condition of this majority, especially in what is most important, in its freedom and its enlightenment. Only then will your situation, too, be tranquil and truly good.

This was written by Lev Tolstoy, who, writing this, tried to expound, not merely his own opinion, but the opinion of many most excellent, unselfish, sensible, and kind people, who wish for the same.

March 10, 1901.

THREE LETTERS CONCERNING SHOPOV LETTER TO THE " FREE THOUGHT," A WEEKLY PUBLISHED IN SOFIA, BULGARIA Dear Sir : – I thank you for the information about Shopov. Although I was not quite able to understand his speech for the defence, I saw that he is a man who has profound convictions concerning the Christian truth.

He is very young, and so I feel terribly for his sake. God aid him to be, not the soil from which the seed sprouts rapidly, without being able to take firm root, but such as will produce fruit a hundredfold.

The longer I live and think, approaching death, the more I am convinced that the army, that is, the men who are prepared to commit murder, is the cause, not only of all the calamities, but also of all the corruption of manners in the world, and that salvation lies only in what is being done by dear, beloved Shopov (may God strengthen him).

The longer I live, the more I marvel at the blindness of our learned world (at times I think that this blindness is intentional), which offers every imaginable means for the salvation of men from their wretchedness, except the one which will certainly save them from wretchedness and from the terrible sin of murder, by which the existing order holds itself and which we make use of. The only ones who are not blind are the governments, which hold to the murders and so are afraid of Shopovs more than of the armies of their neighbours. You no doubt know Russian, and so you will forgive me for not answering you in the language in which you write. If you

have any communication with dear Shopov, give him, if you please, my love, gratefulness, and respect, and this one piece of advice : let him not insist on his refusal, if he is doing it for the sake of men, and not for God, and let him be guided only by his relation to God.

I shall be very thankful to you, if you will keep me informed as to his future fate.

With the greatest respect, ever ready to serve you.

May 25, 1901.

LETTER TO G. SHOPOV

Dear Friend Georgi: – Your letter I received long ago, and I was very happy to receive it, and thank you very much for it, but did not answer it on account of ill health and a mass of work. Please continue to inform me concerning your situation. How do you bear your confinement ? Is it severe ? Do they admit visitors to you, and let you have books? Also let me know about your family relations: have you any parents? Who are your relatives, and how do they look upon your act ?

Can I not in some way be useful to you ? If it is possible for you, translate your letters for me into Russian, and if not, write as legibly as possible, so that every letter may be made out ; I shall then be able to make out the sense. Maybe it is hard for you to read my letters. But I assume that you understand Russian better than we understand Bulgarian. Their having tried you, not for the refusal to do military service, but for non-fulfilment of military orders, – that is what they always do. They cannot do anything else, and I truly pity them. And you, who are in their power and are deprived by them of liberty, must none the less pity them. They feel that truth and God are against them, and they cling to everything to save themselves, but their days are counted.

And the terrible revolution which you produce, without storming a Bastille, but by sitting in prison, destroys and will destroy all the present godless structure of life, and will give a chance for the new one to be founded. I have used all my powers in serving God in this, and if it can be transmitted to you, I should like to send you what I have written about it.

I send you my brotherly love.

August 10, 1901.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF " FREE THOUGHT," OF SOFIA, BULGARIA

Dear Sir : – From your letter I see that the Bulgarian government is

not only coarse and cruel, but also astounding ly stupid (I say, the government, because I am convinced that the lower authorities would not treat this youth, who in any case ought to inspire sympathy and respect, with such barbarism and cruelty, if that did not correspond to the demands and wishes of the higher authorities). It is natural for the governments of the great states, like France and Germany, and for the most abominable government of my own country, to treat cruelly such men as Shopov, who by their lives and acts indicate the path of moral progress on which humanity is walking. They, that is, the governments, can do nothing else, because they are based on rude force, while moral progress consists in substituting for rude force the consciousness of the brotherhood of men, and so the governments are compelled to suppress every manifestation of true progress, which they actually do from a sense of selfpreservation. But the small nationalities and states, like Bulgaria, Servia, Switzerland, and others, can obviously not attain anything through rude force. In the struggle with force they will always be crushed by the immeasurably more powerful states, Austria, Germany, England, Dussia.

The rôle of the small nationalities does not consist in aping and imitating the larger states, in surrendering themselves to militarism and to all the terrors and cruelties which are connected with it (as may be seen in the small example of Shopov's case), but, being free from the burden and rudeness of militarism, in going ahead, to the best of their abilities, on the path of moral progress, pointing out the path to the larger nations.

Thus Germany did, though not so much in the sense of moral, as of .esthetic and scientific progress, when it was divided up into small duchies and had not yet partaken of the poison of rude force, which is killing it spiritually. Thus acts little Switzerland, showing people an example and showing them the possibility of a union of liberty and social order.

How nice it would be, if your Bulgarian people would come in time to their senses, and, instead of introducing discipline and torturing men, only that they may not fall behind their erring neighbours, who imitate the larger nations, and to be able to fight with them, – how nice it would be if your good, industrious, sensible people should use all their forces in the establishment of liberty and equality for themselves, thus showing an example to the other nations, instead of trying to do what they cannot do, – frightening their neighbours with their disciplined army. How nice that would be!

But acts such as the torture of Shopov only cast disgrace on the government which commits them, and give us a bad opinion of the society which silently endures such dishonourable acts. Shopov is intentionally tortured as a soldier, although he from the start refused to be enlisted in the army, – not through caprice or a lack of a desire to be useful to people, but because military service, which has murder for its aim, is not in agreement with that Christianity which the nation and the government of Bulgaria profess ; and so the trial of Shopov, as having violated discipline

as a soldier, is a lie and a deceit, which is practised by the government and its slaves on a defenceless, honest man. Even from the standpoint of the government, which may fear that, if Shopov's refusal is left unpunished, no one will be willing to serve, all the government could do, not only to observe justice, but also from a feeling of self-preservation, is to make him do some public work, which is not in disagreement with his belief.

With the fullest respect, your obedient servant.
Koréiz, Tauris Government, October 17, 1901.

THE TOLSTOY SOCIETY OF MANCHESTER, ENGLAND (Translated from the Russian translation of the English original.)

Dear Friend: – You are right in assuming that I must be interested in the " Tolstoy Society." But I am sorry that there is left in me enough vanity to be interested in it. I have always been of the opinion – and it cannot change – that to be a member of the ancient society, established by God at the beginning of the conscious life of humanity, is more productive for the individual and for humanity, than being a member of limited societies, which are organized by us for the attainment of those ends which we are able to cognize. I think that the preference which we show for our own societies is due to this, that the part which we play in them appears to us much more important than the one which we fulfil in the great society of God. But that is only self-deception : all three kinds of activity, mentioned by you in your letter, are more certainly attained by a man who considers himself to be a member of the great society of God, than by one who is a member of the " Tolstoy Society." Such a man, if he is sincere, – as I know that you are, – will, in the first place, disseminate, as well as he can, those ideas which have given him spiritual satisfaction and energy of life, without troubling himself whether they are Tolstoy's or anybody's else. In the second place, he will try with all his might to urge people to express their opinions concerning the most important questions of life. In the third place, he will strive to afford to every one with whom he comes into contact as much joy and happiness as he can; and he will also help those who fall into difficulties from a thorough following of Christ's teaching. A man who belongs to the great society of God will, besides, do many other Christian acts, which are neither foreseen nor determined by the " Tolstoy Society," nor by any other. I suppose there are some advantages in the union of men of similar thoughts into societies; but I think that the disadvantages are much more considerable than the advantages. And so I confess that for me it would be a great loss to change my membership in the great society of God for the apparently useful participation in any human society whatever.

I am sorry, dear friend, to differ from you, but I cannot think otherwise.

August 15, 1901.

LETTER TO AN ORTHODOX PRIEST

Dear Brother: – I am sorry I do not know your patronymic. Your letter has given me much pleasure. You are the fourth priest in whom I find a full agreement, not with my views, but with the essence of Christ's teaching, which in its true significance is accessible to babes and cannot call forth any disagreement. And this gives me pleasure.

There is one thing in your letter which disturbs me. That is your mention of metaphysics and ecclesiasticism. I am afraid that you have formed your own metaphysics, or that you stick to the ecclesiastic metaphysics, which makes it possible for you with your views to remain a priest. From the fact that you have been serving ten years, I conclude that you are still a young man, young enough to be my son, if not my grandson, and so I will take the liberty of giving you an unasked advice as to how, in my opinion, a priest should act, if he has freed himself from superstition and has come to comprehend Christ's teaching in its full significance and wants to follow it. Being in a situation which is incompatible with the practice of Christ's teaching, – such are the situations of the warrior and the priest, – people frequently invent or adopt some complex, intricate system of metaphysics which is to justify their situation. It is against this offence that I should like to guard you. For a Christian there is and there can be no complicated metaphysics. Everything which in the Christian teaching may be called metaphysics consists in a simple, all-comprehensible proposition that all men are the sons of God, brothers, and so must love the Father and the brothers, and so must act toward others as they would that others should act toward them. I think that every metaphysics above this was invented by the evil one for the purpose of harmonizing his discordant position with the Christian teaching. There are also priests, – I know such, – who, feeling the incompatibility of their position with a pure understanding of Christianity, think that they can justify themselves with this, that in their position they can better struggle against superstitions and spread the Christian truth. I assume that such a position is still more incorrect. In religious matters the end cannot justify the means, for the very reason that the means of departing from the truth destroy every possibility of attaining the end, which consists in the teaching of the truth. But the main thing is, that one has not been called to teach others (Matt. xiii. 8, 9), but only to perfect oneself in the truth and in love. Only by means of this self-perfection (without any thought of others) can a man act upon others.

Pardon me for retorting to what you have not told me and, perhaps, are not even thinking of; but, having received a powerful and joyous impression from your letter, I felt like telling you everything I think about the tragical position of a priest who has come to know

the truth, about the best way out from this position, and about the dangers of this position.

The best way out from this position – a heroic issue – is, in my opinion, for the priest to collect his parishioners, to come out on the ambo to them, and, instead of a service and the worship of the images, to bow to the ground before the people, asking their forgiveness for having led them into error. The second way out is the one which ten years ago was chosen by a remarkable man, Priest Appolov, whom I knew from the Vyatka Seminary, and who was serving in the Stavropol Eparchy. He announced to the bishop that he could not, on account of his changed views, continue to act as a priest. He was called out to Stavropol, and the authorities and the members of his family tormented him so much that he decided to go back to his place ; but, staying there less than a year, he was unable to stand it any longer, and again resigned and had himself unfrocked. His wife left him. All these sufferings affected him so much that he died, as a saint, without having changed his convictions and, above all, his love.

That is a second way out ; but I know how terribly hard it is, – in consideration of the family relations of every priest and in consideration of the surroundings, – and so I fully understand and by no means condemn a priest who through weakness remains a priest, in spite of his not believing in what he does. One thing I say and allow myself to counsel (precisely the same I advise those Christians to do of whom military service is demanded), and that is, not to use your reason for sophistry, so that it may appear that, while acting badly, you are doing well.

Let a man only keep truth before him in all its purity, without compromising with his honesty, and he will find a means of acting in the best manner possible, in accordance with his strength. A priest who understands the true Christian teaching must, in my opinion, like any other Christian, in the first place, strive to know the truth in all its purity and fulness, – independently of his position, and, in the second, according to his strength, change his position, making it approach the recognized truth.

(This approach takes place of itself, if a man is sincere.)

To what extent a man approaches it (for a priest this is very hard, because his position is not only far from truth, but even opposed and hostile to it), – to what extent and how a man approaches it, – that is his affair with God, of which outsiders cannot judge.

I send you my brotherly greeting.

August 15, 1901.

Your loving brother.

LETTER TO A FRENCH PASTOR (Translated from the Russian translation of the original French letter).

Dear Sir : – I received your letter and thank you for the sentiments

which you express to me. I also thank you very much for the excerpts from Auguste Sabatier.

I am sorry that I know this remarkable man only by name and from references to him. The excerpts quoted by you concerning the comprehension of Christianity prove to me that I could be with him in complete communion of thoughts and feelings, as also with you and all those who share his comprehension.

There is, none the less, one point in which I do not agree with you, and that is, your representation of the necessity of the church, and, therefore, of pastors, that is of people vested with certain authority. I cannot forget verses 8 and 9 of Matt, rxiii., not because these verses are in the Gospel, but because for me it is an obvious truth that there can be no pastors, teachers, guides among Christians, and that it is this very violation of the Gospel law that has until now reduced almost to zero the preaching of the true Christian doctrine.

In my opinion, the chief meaning of the Christian teaching is the establishment of a direct communion between God and man. Every man who takes upon himself the role of a mediator in this communion keeps him whom he wants to guide from entering into direct communion with God, and – what is worse still – himself completely departs from the possibility of living in a Christian way.

In my opinion, the acme of pride, a sin which more than anything else removes me from God, is to tell myself that I am able to help others to live well and to save their souls. All a man can do, if he strives to follow the Christian teaching, is to try to perfect himself as much as possible (Matt. v. 48), to use all his strength, all his energy, in this self-perfection. That is the only way of influencing one's neighbours and helping them on the path of goodness. If a church exists, its limits are not announced to any one, and no one can know whether he belongs to it or not. All a man can do and hope for is to strive to become a part of it, but no one can be sure that he has become such indeed, and still less can he assume that he has the right and the possibility of leading others. I beg you, dear sir, to pardon the frankness with which I expound my opinion, which is contrary to yours, and to believe my sentiments of sympathy and respect, with which I am always ready to serve you.

Yasnaya Polyana, August 26, 1901.

ON THE FRANCO – RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

(A letter to Pietro Mazzini!)

My answer to your first question, " What does the Russian nation think of the Franco-Russian Alliance ? " is this : The Russian nation – the real nation – does not have the slightest conception about the existence of this alliance; but if the masses even knew of

it, I am sure that, since all the nations are absolutely alike to them, their common sense, as also their feeling of humanity, would show them that this exclusive alliance with one nation, to the exclusion of every other, can have no other purpose than to draw them into hostility, and perhaps into wars, with other nations, and so this alliance would be most disagreeable to them.

In reply to your question, " Does the Russian nation share the transports of the French nation?" I think I can say that not only does the Russian nation not share these transports (if they exist in reality, which I doubt very much), but if the masses knew everything that is being said and done in France in connection with this alliance, they would more likely experience a sentiment of distrust and antipathy for the nation which without any rational cause suddenly begins to manifest an unexpected and exclusive love for them.

In regard to the third question, " What is the significance of this alliance for civilization in general ? " I think I am right in supposing that, since this alliance can

ITranslated from the Russian rendering of the French letter.

have no other aim than war or the menace of war, directed against other nations, it cannot help but be harmful. As regards the significance of this alliance for the two contracting nationalities, it is clear that, as in the past, so in the future it will be a positive evil for both nations.

The French government, the press, and all that part of French society which extols this alliance, have already made, and will be more and more compelled to make, concessions and compromises in the traditions of a free and humane nation, in order to pretend to agree, or actually to agree, with the intentions and sentiments of the most despotic, backward, and cruel government in all of Europe. That has been and will be a great detriment to France, while on Russia this alliance has already had, and will have, if continued, a still more deleterious effect. Ever since this ill-fated alliance, the Russian government, which at one time was ashamed of the opinion of Europe and counted with it, now no longer cares for it, and, conscious of the support of this strange friendship on the part of the nation which is considered to be the most civilized in the world, it is becoming with every day more reactionary, despotic, and cruel. Thus this savage and unfortunate alliance can, in my opinion, have no other than a most negative effect upon the wellbeing of the two nations, as also upon civilization in general.

Yasnaya Polyana, September 9, 1901.

ON THE STREET RIOTS I HAVE read the Popular Pamphlets. The one about How the Priests Hare Enslaved the People with Christ's Teaching is beautiful, and I subscribe to it with both my hands. So, too, the pamphlet About the Stundists is good.

The pamphlet About the Street Riots is very miserable.

It is not only immoral, but also impracticable and simply stupid. If I were the government, I would print such pamphlets at government expense and would distribute millions of copies of them. Nothing can more thoroughly undermine or make impossible the people's confidence in the men who share the views expressed there, than such pamphlets.

What the pamphlet proposes is immoral, because, if a soldier has by a whole series of suggestions (hypnosis) been brought to this, that he is put to the necessity of either killing or enduring great suffering, and, besides, his intelligence is so bedimmed that he does not see the sin of murder, a man who would listen to the author of the pamphlet would prepare himself for murder, and would accomplish it, provoked to it by nothing very doubtful, but by the assertions of the author of the pamphlet, that the commission of the murder will make it better for him and for his brothers to live in the world.

What the pamphlet proposes is impracticable, because it is unreasonable to suppose that unarmed, undisciplined men should be able to take the arms away from armed and disciplined men, and if this should happen anywhere, though there is but cue chance in a thousand for it, those men who had seized the arms would immediately be crushed by real troops from other places.

It is stupid, because for men to prepare themselves for murder, if they wish to free themselves from murders and the threat of murder, means to give their enemies the only legitimate reason for using against them every possible act of violence, and even murder, and to justify all those which were committed before.

I think it is superfluous for me to proclaim that I do not agree with the men who share the views of the pamphlet concerning the street riots. I have for almost thirty years been repeating one and the same thing from all sides, namely, that the whole thing consists in the spiritual condition of men, that every act of violence is a sin, and that the violence of those who struggle against violence is madness. And so a sincere man will not confuse me with revolutionists who practise violence; but that an insincere man can calumniate any one he pleases in any way he may wish, - against this no one can protect himself, and there is even no need to do so.

December 2, 1901.

LETTER TO A JEW EXPRESSIONS ON THE KISHINÉV TRAGEDY CABLEGRAM TO THE " NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW "

The government is to blame, in the first place, for exempting the Jews, as a special caste, from the common rights ; in the second, for the forcible inculcation of idolatry, instead of Christianity, on the Russian people.

LETTER TO A RUSSIAN EDITOR The terrible crime committed in Kishinev has affected me painfully. I partly expressed my relation to this affair in a letter to a Jew, an acquaintance of mine, a copy of which I here enclose.

The other day we sent from Moscow a collective letter to the Mayor of Kishinev, in which we expressed our sentiments in regard to this terrible matter.

It will give me great pleasure to cooperate with you in your volume of collections, and I will try to write something to fit the occasion.

Unfortunately, what I have to say, namely, that the government alone is to blame, not only for the Kishinév riots, but also for all that disorder which has taken possession of a certain small part of the Russian population, – by no means the masses, – unfortunately I cannot say so in a Russian publication.

May 6, 1901.

I have received your letter. I have received several such letters. All my correspondents, who write like you, ask me to express my opinion about the Kishinév affair.

It seems to me that in these requests there is a certain misunderstanding. It is assumed that my voice has some weight, and so I am asked to express my opinion of such an important event, so complex in its causes, as the awful deed committed in Kishinev.

The misunderstanding consists in demanding of me the activity of a publicist, whereas I am a man all absorbed in one very definite question, which has nothing in common with the appreciation of contemporary events, namely, with the religious question and its application to life, it is just as unreasonable to demand of me a public expression of opinion concerning contemporary events, as to demand it of any specialist who enjoys a certain reputation. I may – and I have done so – make use of some contemporary event for the purpose of illustrating an idea developed by me, but I am absolutely unable, even if I considered this necessary, to express my opinion, as the publicists do, on all contemporary, however important, events. If I had to act in this manner, I should be obliged to express thoughtless or trite ideas, repeating what has been said by others, and then, it is obvious, there would not exist that significance of my opinion, on the basis of which I am asked to express myself.

But as regards my relation to the Jews and the terrible Kishinév affair, I should think that all those who are interested in my world-conception ought to know what it is. My relation to the Jews cannot be any other than that to my brothers, whom I love, not because they are Jews, but because we and they, like all men, are the sons of one Father, God, and this love does not demand any effort of me, since I have met and know very good people among the

Jews.

But my relation to the Kishinev crime is also determined of itself by my religious world-conception. Even then, after the first newspaper report, I understood all the horror of what had taken place, and experienced a heavy mixed feeling of pity for the innocent victims of the bestiality of the crowd, of perplexity in regard to the beastliness of these people, who call themselves Christians, of disgust and abhorrence toward those so-called cultured people who stirred up the crowd and sympathized with its deeds, and, above all, of horror before the real culprit, our government, with its stultifying and fanaticizing clergy and with its robber gang of officials. The Kishinev tragedy is only a direct consequence of the propaganda of lies and violence, which the Russian government has conducted with such tension and stubbornness.

But the relation of the government to this event is only a new proof of its coarse egoism, which does not stop before any cruelties, when it is concerned about the suppression of a movement which seems to it to be dangerous, and of its complete indifference – resembling the indifference of the Turkish government to the Armenian atrocities – to the most terrible cruelties, so long as they do not touch its own interests.

This is all I can say à propos of the Kishinev affair, but I have said all that before.

But if you ask me what, in my opinion, the Jews should do, my answer again results naturally from that Christian teaching which I try to understand and which I try to follow. The Jews, like any other people, need but this for their good: as much as possible in their lives to follow the universal rule, – to act toward others as they would that others should act toward them, and to struggle with the government, not by means of violence, – this means must be left to the government, – but by means of a good life, which not only excludes every violence against one's neighbour, but even every participation in violence and all use for one's advantage of the instruments of violence, as established by the government.

This is all – it is both old and well known – I have to say on the occasion of the terrible Kishinev tragedy.

Ytisnaya Pul ya mi, April 27, 1903.

. . . When the children ask whether those who destroy and loot the property of their neighbours and torment and kill them are doing right, there is but one answer, namely, that such men are great criminals, who violate God's chief law of the brotherhood of all men and of love among themselves.

But if they ask who is to blame for such evil deeds, I

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should answer that it is the Russian government that is to blame, in the first place, because it deprives the Jews of the most primitive and natural rights and makes of them a separate caste ; in the second place, because it inculcates upon the Russian people an idolatrous religion, called Christian Orthodoxy, and, concealing the true Christianity from the people, in every way corrupts them.

But if they ask what the Jews are to do in order to free themselves from these calamities, I should answer that the Jews should do what all people should always do, especially in times of calamities, that is, of trials,-

they should try more and more clearly to know God's law

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and more and more carry out in life God's one and eternal law of union and love, which is expressed in the utterance about doing unto others as we would that others should do to us.

These are all the answers which I can give to your questions and to the questions of your pupils. I shall be very glad, if they satisfy you and them.

1903.

LETTERS SINCE JANUARY, 1902

ANSWER TO A SWEDISH SOCIETY OF ARTISTS AND SCHOLARS

Gentlemen : - The award of the Nobel Prize to some one else, and not to me, was doubly agreeable to me : in the first place, it saved me the hard necessity of disposing in one way or another of the money, which is by all other men considered to be very useful and necessary, but by me a source of every kind of evil ; in the second place, it gave some people whom I respect an occasion for expressing their sympathy to me, for which I thank them with all my heart.

Gaspra, January 20, 1902.

Dear -----: - I fully agree with you in what you write. I slowly came to this conviction and now hold it firmly: I have expressed it in my article, "What is Religion, and in What Does Its Essence Consist ?" which Tchertkoff is, no doubt, printing now.

But there is one very important point on which I differ from you : indeed, at the present time, especially with us in Russia, the ecclesiastic and governmental deceptions form the chief obstacle for the establishment of the Christian life or even of an approach to it, but it cannot be said that a struggle with these deceptions

forms the chief object of a Christian. The chief object of a Christian, by means of which he attains all ends, among them the one which now confronts one in Russia, is everywhere and always this one : to kindle his fire and to make it shine before people. But the diversion of a man's whole attention, of all his efforts to some one private purpose, as, for example, to a life of manual labour, to preaching, or, as in the present case, to a struggle with these or those deceptions, is always a mistake, like what a man would do at an inundation, if, instead of letting the water out of the chief source or working on the dam which retains the water, he should busy himself with putting up barriers in his street, without observing that the water will inundate him from some other side.

Having received your letter I intended to write to you, to remind you that in the struggle we must be as wise as the serpents, and as meek as the doves ; but that is not enough : we must not for a minute forget the main end and must not abandon ourselves to working for the attainment of some private end. This means not that we should not struggle against the deceptions (knowing that they are the greatest evil we shall do so involuntarily), but that we should struggle against them only when this struggle appears as the result of the general striving after self-perfection. Another comparison : the houses have to be protected against the possibility of catching fire one from another. It is possible to cut a lot of green branches and stick them between the houses, and for a day or two this will apparently be right. But it is also possible to set out a lot of young trees, and when these take root and grow up it will indeed be for all times. It is necessary for our activity to have roots. These roots are in our submission to the will of God, in our personal life, when devoted to self-perfection and the increase of love.

My physical health is still bad, but spiritually I feel very well, and I can work, and do work as well as I can, and more seriously, in view of the near end. I think of you and love you and am afraid for your zeal.

Gdspra, January 20, J002.

. . . Let us become Chuvashes and listen, not to two prophets (there are no prophets), but to two men.

One says to the Chuvash : "Do you feel in yourself anything outside your body ? " – Every Chuvash will say that he feels something spiritual, thinking, loving. – Then we shall ask him : " Is the spiritual being which you feel in yourself almighty ? " – The Chuvash will say that it is not, that he feels that this being is limited. – Then we shall say to him : " But if the being which you recognize in yourself is limited, there must be a being which is unlimited. This unlimited being is God, whose essence you feel in yourself limited, and who, as an unlimited being, embraces you in such a way that you are in Him." – Thus will the first man speak, without asserting about himself that he is from God, that he is a prophet, but only asserting what everybody knows and may observe in himself.

Another, Mohammed, will begin by saying : " Believe me that I am a prophet and that everything which I shall tell you which is written in my Koran is the veritable truth, as revealed to me by God Himself." And he will go on to expound all his doctrine. To this the Chuvash, if he is not altogether a fool (and there are many clever men among them), will say : " Why should I believe you that everything you say is from God ? I did not see God transmit His truth to you, and I have not the slightest proofs that you are a prophet, the more so since I have been told that there are Taoists, Buddhists, Brahmins, Mormons, who have just such prophets as you, who say of themselves precisely the same as what you say of yourself. Thus, your saying about yourself that you are a prophet cannot in the least convince me that what you say and what is written in the Koran is the veritable truth. Your having gone down to the seventh heaven does not convince me in the least, because I did not see it.

But what is written in the Koran is not quite clear, and often intricate, wordy, arbitrary, and even historically incorrect, as I have heard from people. What can alone convince me is what I recognize myself and am able to verify by reasoning and inner experience." Thus will the clever Chuvash speak in reply to the words of the second man, and I think he will be quite right.

So this is what I think about Mohammedanism. It will be a good teaching and will coincide with the teaching of all truly religious men, only when it shall reject the blind faith in Mohammed and the Koran and will take from that belief what is in agreement with the reason and the conscience of all men. . . .

Nove ml>er, 1902.

... I have for the last twenty years established such a relation to God and the demands arising from this relation ; and with this relation I have been living until the present, and the longer I live, the more I am confirmed in it ; and, approaching death, which I await every day, I experience full peace and equal joy of life and of death.

My belief does not agree with yours ; but I do not tell or advise you to give up yours and accept mine. I know that this is as impossible for you as to change your physiological nature, – to find a taste in what is nauseating to you, and vice versa. And so I not only do not advise you to do so, but, on the contrary, advise you to stick to what is your own and to work it out still farther, if it is at all subject to development.

A man can believe only what he is led to believe by the aggregate of all his spiritual forces.

Each of us looks at the world and at the beginning sees it through the little window which he himself has cut out or chosen of his free will. And so it may happen that a man who sees dimly and whose window is not clear may himself, of his own will, pass over to

another man's window ; but it is quite unreasonable and, to say the least, impolite to call a man, who is satisfied with what he sees, away from his window to your own.

We all see one and the same God, we all live by His will, and we all, looking at Him from various sides, are able to do His chief law, – to love one another, – in spite of the difference of our view of Him. . . .

March, 1903.

. . . You do not understand what is meant by the word " God," and the mention of this word always irritates you. From this you conclude that " it is time for humanity to v V stop talking of God, whom no one understands." It is very natural for you to be irritated by the use of a word the meaning of which you do not understand. It is always so. But your conclusion that no one understands what God is, because you do not understand it, is, to say the least, strange. The fact that all mankind has always used this word, being in need of the concept, ought to have led you to the thought that it is not humanity that is to blame, but you, for not understanding that which is understood by the whole of mankind or a great majority of it, and that, therefore, you ought not to advise mankind to stop talking of God, but should yourself try to understand what you do not understand.

Every man, like yourself, must of necessity recognize himself to be a part of something infinite. It is this infinite, of which man recognizes himself to be a part, that is God.

For unenlightened men, to which division belong the vast majority of the so-called learned, who do not understand anything but matter, God will be matter, endless in time and space. Such a concept of God will be very silly, but still they will have a God of their own, no matter how silly. But for enlightened men, who understand that the beginning and essence of life is not in matter, but in the spirit, God will be that infinite unlimited being which they recognize in themselves within boundaries limited by time and space.

And such a God has been recognized and acknowledged and will be acknowledged by mankind at all times, so long as it does not fall into a beastly state.

1903.

. . . You say that you cannot believe in God the Creator, who created man and all beings, which are subject to diseases, struggle, sufferings.

But the concept of God the Creator is an old superstition, which it is not only superfluous, but even harmful to believe in. We have not the slightest right to imagine a God the Creator.

All we can assert is this, that we exist amidst the world, which

presents itself to us as infinite in space and time, and that the basis of our life is something immaterial. We recognize this principle in ourselves in a limited condition, and in consequence of it cannot help having a concept of this immaterial principle, which is not limited and not subject to conditions of time and space. This principle we call God.

This basis of our life cannot be good or evil. It is that which is, to ov. What we call evil is merely our ignorance of the consequences of what we see only the causes of.

The true teaching of life, which has been preached by all the sages, Buddha, Confucius, the Brahmins, Lao-tse, Isaiah, and Jesus, consists in the recognition of that immaterial principle which forms our life. Only on the consciousness of this principle may be based and actually is based my belief in my existence,— not the future, but the everlasting existence. The moment I am convinced that life consists in the immaterial principle, as cognized by me, recognized by me as my true ego, I can no longer believe in the destruction of this extratemporal and extraspatial ego.

The concept of death is only an error, which is called forth by the false concept that man's real ego is a material integument.

Such are, in a few words, the causes which make me think that death is not an evil, but a change of form, which can be only a progress in life, just as, according to my observation, is all that which during this existence is taking place in me and in all beings.

1903.

. . . John iii. 13, in my opinion, means this, that every man is a son of God, and in every man there is a particle of the divinity. The next two verses mean, that this particle of God, which is in every man, must be glorified in each of us, and this glorifying will free us from all evils, as did the glorified serpent in the wilderness.

The idea is, that man must recognize himself to be the son of God, and so he must recognize all other men to be. If man only understood and remembered who he is, he would not abase and defile his dignity with contemptible, low cares and acts. And if he remembered that every man is just such a son of God, he would not permit himself to insult and despise men, — the sons of God and his brothers.

In these verses is the essence of Christ's teaching. . . .
1903.

No one, much less I, can be out of sympathy with his plan of a universal strike. But for such a thing to take place, it is necessary for people to be united in one comprehension. Such union of men in one comprehension is given by religion only. And so, to attain the end toward which he is striving, it is necessary to

contribute to the dissemination and establishment of the one true religion. It is as impossible to arrange a universal strike from men of various conceptions of life, as it is impossible to bake bread from rye that has not yet matured and is still in the ear.

1903.

I was very glad to receive your letter, dear -----.

I have for a long time been thinking of you and of those subjects of which you write, the most important subjects in the world.

I have not only not changed my view of myself gratifying my own prime needs, but even feel more vividly than ever the importance of it and the sin of my nonfulfilment of it. There have been many causes which have drawn me away from this fulfilment, but I will not count them over, because the chief cause is my weakness, my sin. And so the reception of your letter has been a spiritual joy for me, – an arraignment and a reminder.

There is one thing that consoles me, and that is, that, while I lived badly, I did not deceive, did not justify myself, and never said to myself that I could free myself from this labour, for the reason that I write books ; I have always recognized what you say, – that just as I have to read a good book, so does he who works for me, and that, if I am able to write a good book, there are hundreds and thousands of men who could write better books, if they were not oppressed and crushed by work. Thus I not only do not disagree with you, but also, being conscious of my sin and suffering from it, more strongly than ever recognize the prime importance of denying the right to use the extorted labour of another man.

As I thought and heard of you, I recognized the whole burden of your situation, and at the same time did not stop envying you. Do not lose your courage, dear friend.

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved," refers directly to your situation. I think that no worry can keep a man from thinking rightly (as I, indeed, see from your letter). What interferes with right reasoning is idleness and luxury, and that I frequently feel in my own case.

However strange and bad it may seem that I, who live in luxury, should permit myself to advise you to continue living in want, I do so boldly, because I cannot for a minute doubt that your life is a good life before your own conscience, before God, and so most necessary and useful to men ; while my activity, no matter how useful it may appear to some people, loses, – I wish to hope, not everything, – but certainly the greatest part of its meaning, in consequence of the non-fulfilment of the chief symptom of the sincerity of what I profess.

The other day I had a visit from a clever and religious American, Bryan, and he asked me why I considered simple manual labour indispensable. I told him almost the same as you write, that, in the first place, it is a sign of sincerity in recognizing the equality

of all men ; in the second, it brings us nearer to the majority of labouring men, from whom we are fenced off by a wall, if we make use of their want; in the third, it gives us the highest good, peace of mind, which does not exist and cannot exist in the case of a sincere man, who makes use of the services of slaves.

So this is my answer to the first point of your letter. Now as to the second, the most difficult point, that about the religious education.

In education in general, both physical and mental, I assume it to be most important not to force anything on the children, but to wait and answer their demands, as they arise ; this is most particularly necessary in the chief subject of education, – in religious education.

As it is useless and harmful to feed a child when he does not want to eat, or to force upon him information which does not interest him and he does not need, so it is even more harmful to impress children with any religious conceptions for which they do not ask, and for the most part to formulate them coarsely and thus to impair that religious relation to life which at this time may unconsciously arise and establish itself in the child.

All that is necessary, it seems to me, is to answer with absolute truthfulness the questions put by the child. It seems very simple to answer truthfully a child's religious questions, but in reality this can be done only by him who has answered truthfully to himself religious questions about God, life, death, good, and evil. – those very questions which children always put very clearly and definitely.

Here there is confirmed what I have always thought of education and what you say in your letter, namely, that the essence of the education of children consists in the education of oneself. However strange this may seem, this self-education is the most powerful weapon which parents have for influencing their children. And that first article, which your future lady neighbours have made their own, namely, " Perfect yourself," is the highest and, however strange this may seem, the most practical activity (in the sense of serving other men, influencing other men) which a man can have. Even so the conditions of your hard life, which you, no doubt, do not properly appreciate, are most advantageous in the matter of education. Your life is serious, and your children see and understand it.

But if you want from me a more definite indication as to what to read or put into the children's hands for the purpose of religious education, I should say that it is not right to confine oneself to the religious writings of one belief, – in our case, that of Christianity, – but one should use the Buddhist, Brahmin, Confucianist, de wish religious literature on a par with the Christian.

This communion with you has given me very, very much pleasure. I wish it could be one-hundredth part as useful to you as it is to me, and so I wish it were frequently repeated.

Ydsnaya Polyana, December 10, 1903.