

THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS

Collected from L. N. Tolstoy's Private Correspondence, by D. R. Kudryavtsev

by Leo Tolstoy

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LETTER FROM L. N. TOLSTOY TO D. R. KUDRYAVTSEV

Dear Brother : - I received your book and read it partly with pleasure, recalling those trains of thought and those sentiments which I experienced, when I expressed the thoughts which are contained in it, and partly with annoyance and sorrow, because I have expressed so obscurely what I wanted to express.

I have for a long time been struggling with vanity and egoism, and have conquered these to such an extent that I no longer experience a disagreeable sensation at the thought that I shall be condemned for my too bold, thoughtless, and frequently insufficiently grounded expression of my thoughts, the more so, since I agree with you that here and there something from what you have collected may be of use to men.

I should never have thought of publishing this book, but, once it is out, I have nothing against it, and only thank you for the sympathy which you express.

Affectionately,

L. Tolstoy.

1 From this collection extracts previously given are omitted.-  
Translator's Note.

I.

RELIGION

1

The whole misunderstanding is based on this, that, speaking of religion, the positivists understand by it something quite different

from what I do and what Confucius, Lao-tse, Buddha, Christ, have said about it.

According to the opinion of the positivists, it is necessary to invent, or at least to think out, a religion, and it is necessary to think out such a religion as will have a good effect upon men and will agree with science, and will combine and embrace everything and, warming up people and encouraging them to do good, will not impair their lives.

But I understand (I flatter myself with the hope that I am not alone in this) religion quite differently.

Religion is the consciousness of those truths which are universally accessible to all men, in all their situations, at all times, and are as indubitable as that two times two are four.

The business of religion is to find and express these truths, and when this truth is expressed, it will inevitably change the life of men; and so what the positivists call a scheme is not at all an arbitrary assertion by anybody, but an expression of those laws which are always unchangeable and are felt by all men.

The business of religion is like geometry.

The relation of the sides to the hypotenuse has always existed, and men always knew that there was some kind of a relation between them; but Pythagoras pointed it out and proved it, and this relation became the possession of all men. But to say that the scheme of morality is not good, because it excludes other schemes, is the same as saying that the theorem of the relation of the sides to the hypotenuse is not good, because it impairs the other false conceptions.

It is not right to reject Christ's scheme (as they say), or the truth (as I say), on the ground that it does not fit in with the invented religion of humanity and excludes the other schemes (as they express it), or the lie (as I call it); it can be rejected only by proving that it is not the truth.

Religion is not composed of a conglomerate of words which may act well upon people; religion is composed of simple, apparent, clear, indubitable moral truths, which are separated from the chaos of false and deceptive judgments ; and such are the truths of Christ.

If I found such truths in Katkov, I should involuntarily accept them at once.

On this lack of comprehension of what I, and all other religious men, consider religion to be, and on the desire to put in place of it a definite form of a propaganda, is all misunderstanding based.

What for us forms the whole meaning of life, our faith, is known by many ; but, unfortunately, very few know that this is not merely the chief, but even the only thing, and that it is not right to speak of it with adornments and elegance.

It is not right to speak of it; it has to be wept over with tears, and when these sincere tears are wanting, it is not right to speak of it on purpose, – it is not right to desecrate it with a frivolous touch.

In Kingsley there is a beautiful philosophical explanation of the Son,– the idea of a man, righteous for himself, for God. In order to be such a righteous man, it is necessary to be insulted, tortured, hanged, hated by all, and yet righteous.

4

(From the Vedas)

Be they horses, cows, elephants, – everything which lives, walks, swims, and flies ; everything which even does not move, like the trees and the grass, – all that is the eyes of Reason.

Everything is formed by Reason. The universe is the eyes of Reason, and Reason is its foundation. Reason is the one existence.

Man, by surrendering himself to Reason and its service, leaves this world of phenomena and enters into a blissful and free world and becomes immortal.

5

Confucius does not mention Mang-Ti, the personal God, but always speaks only of heaven. Here is his relation to the spiritual world. He is asked, " How are we to serve the deceased spirits?"

He said: " Since you do not know how to serve the living, how shall you serve the dead ?"

They asked him about death.

" Since you do not know life, why do you ask about death ? "

He was asked whether the dead knew of our serving them.

He said: " If I answered that they do know, I am afraid that you would ruin your lives serving them. If I told you that they do not know, I am afraid you would entirely forget about them. You have no cause to know what the dead know. There is no need of it. You will know everything in its proper time."

There were many thieves then. They asked him how to be freed from them.

" If you yourselves were not greedy, you would pay them money, and they would stop stealing."

They asked him whether it is right to kill the bad for the benefit of the good.

" Why kill ? Let your wishes be good. The highest is just like the wind, and the lowest like the grass. The wind blows, and the grass bends. The whole question is what and whom to consider the highest.

" To consider the highest is to raise, to respect the good.

" To consider the lowest is to drop, to despise the evil without any compromise."

6

The uncertainty as to what awaits us ahead, beyond the limit of our spiritual vision, this uncertainty, this mystery, is the only possibility of our life, because it secures the forward movement.

We walk, as it were, through an underground passage and see ahead of us the illuminated point of the exit; but that we may reach this exit, ahead of us, in front of us must be an emptiness.

The eternal life is eternal for the very reason that it deploys before us infinitely. If it were completely ' unfolded before us, and we could comprehend it here, in our temporal, carnal existence, it would not be the eternal life, as there would be nothing left beyond it.

7

People generally think little about the meaning of the memory in connection with the life of the spirit, and yet it has a great, and even a mysterious meaning.

During his carnal life, a man only occasionally reaches that elevation of comprehension which alone gives the meaning and true joy of his life.

This condition is not uninterruptedly maintained in our soul. It bursts forth from time to time and illumines our path, as though by disconnected flashes of another, higher life. Why is this so ? Why do we not always maintain ourselves on that height of spiritual illumination to which we have risen ?

This is due to the defect of memory.

Something distracts our attention and we forget. When we again rise to that height, we recall the former occasions when we were in the same condition, and then all the former illuminations of our spirit blend for us into the one, true life outside time and space. Then the offences of the carnal life again distract our attention, and we

again disappear from the sphere of the true life and forget it. In respect to the true life we fall into a state of thoughtlessness, from which we again awaken, when with the new elevation of the spirit memory returns to us.

Now, with our carnal existence, this phenomenon presents itself to us in the form of memory; but when we leave the limits of the carnal life, that which is in the memory will be life itself.

8

Repentance is connected with spiritual growth, just as the breaking of the shell is connected with the hatching of the birdling.

The breaking of the egg or the seed is necessary for the germ to begin to grow and be subjected to the action of air and light. The breaking of the egg is, at the same time, a consequence of the growth of the germ.

The same is true of repentance.

If there is no repentance, there is no forward movement.

If there is no advancing movement, there is no repentance.

9

We all forget that Christ's teaching is not a teaching like that of Moses, of Mohammed, and like all other human teachings, that is, a doctrine of rules to be executed. Christ's teaching is a gospel, that is, a teaching of the good.

He who is thirsty, let him go and drink.

And so, according to this teaching it is impossible to prescribe to any one, to rebuke any one for anything, to condemn any one.

« Go and drink, if thou art thirsty, » that is, take the good which is revealed to us by the spirit of truth.

Can one be ordered to drink ?

Can one be ordered to be blessed ?

Even so a man cannot be rebuked for not drinking, or for not being blessed, nor can he be condemned. The one thing that Christians can do, and always have done, is to feel themselves blessed and to wish to communicate the key of blessedness to other people.

10

Above all else, I do not understand what is meant by the words, " living Christ. "

We call Christ a man who lived and died eighteen hundred years ago, but in respect to whom there formed itself the tradition, as it has been formed in respect to many other men, that he arose from the dead. But we know that people cannot rise from the dead, or fly to heaven, as people tell of Christ.

What, then, is meant by the words, " living Christ ? "

If they designate this, that his teaching is alive, the expression is awkward and unwonted (we do not say, " the living Socrates, the belief in the living Socrates " ), and it is one of those expressions which ought to be avoided, because with the existing superstition about Christ's resurrection this expression may be taken in the sense of confirming the miracle of the resurrection.

But if by the words, " living Christ," we are to understand that he invisibly, like those spirits imagined by the spiritualists, is present in our lives, we must define how this Christ's spirit is to be understood, whether as one of many such spirits, or, as the church theology understands Christ, as God, – as the second person.

In the first case, this will be an arbitrary and useless conception; in the second, this will inevitably lead us, if not to all, at least to the chief propositions of the church theology.

The words, " living Christ," demand an explanation and evoke questions, to which it is necessary to answer:

Who is he, God or not God ?

If he is God, in what relation does he stand to God the Creator ?

When was he created ?

Why was he made incarnate ?

The answers to these questions will inevitably bring us to, " born, uncreated before all time, through whom all has been," to the fall of the angel, to the fall of Adam, or to the invention of one's own theology.

And I think that you will agree with me that none of these is desirable.

And why should it be so ?

Why must I imagine that a dead man is alive, or assert that a man is God, when I know that this is not only an untruth, but also a useless and senseless assertion of what is impossible, because he who is alive cannot be dead, and a man cannot be God.

Will it be easier for me to attain the good life, if I introduce into my world-conception such an insipidity ?

I think the very opposite is true. <

You will ask me, "How then are we to understand Christ ? Are we to understand him just like any other simple man ?"

" By all means," will I reply, " like any other simple man." This is indispensable, in the first place, because it is the truth; in the second place, because without the admixture of miracles and the assertion of the resurrection the teaching is in itself so true, so simple, so attractive, so universal, that there is no man, no matter of what nationality he may be, who has any ground for not accepting it. But with the assertion of the resurrection of the Master, I, without any necessity, add to a great teaching a trite, contemptible invention, which can only repel the majority of men from it. In the third place, it is indispensable for this reason also, that Christ's teaching is important and necessary as the teaching of a man who is precisely like us; it is important to us all, because he, being precisely a man like us, has shown us how each of us may live well.

Is it possible that if the Master has shown me by example and by instruction how I must live and then has left me, it will be more useful for me to imagine that the teacher is invisibly present in my life and aiding me, than for me to try according to my strength to live as he has shown me how ?

In the fourth place, it is also indispensable for me to imagine Christ as a simple man, because the conception of him as a God veils, minimizes, and frequently completely obliterates the relation of man to the one God the Father, whereas in this does the whole essence of Christ's teaching consist. Thus, for the sake of what is superfluous to Christ, his exaltation to the dignity of God, I emasculate his teaching and distort it, that is, deprive myself of the very thing in the name of which I extol him so much.

Is it possible that the terrible experience of those churches that recognized Christ as God and, in consequence of it, arrived at a complete negation of the essence of his teaching, is not a sufficient lesson for us, to keep us from blundering on the same path ?

The main thing is, it is an untruth, and all know this.

Christ is for me, yes, pardon it, and for you, too, and for all men, not what we have imagined him to be, but what he is in reality, a great teacher of life, who lived eighteen hundred years ago, who died on the cross the same real death as all people die, and who left us a teaching which gives a meaning and the good to our life.

Let us feed on this teaching, let us try deeper and deeper to penetrate its meaning; let us make farther deductions and applications from it.

No matter what we may say, the word " Christ" remains for us what it is, - a word serving to designate a man to whom a certain teaching

is ascribed, and nothing else. Every ascription of another meaning to the word " Christ" only destroys the seriousness and the sincerity of the relation to Christ's teaching and even impairs its meaning.

The meaning of the teaching in its simplest expression is for me as follows: my life, which above all else I conceive as my own, given to me for my enjoyment, does not belong to me, but to Him who has given me the life and who has sent me into this world for the fulfilment of His will. My life belongs to the Father, as Christ calls Him who gives the life to us and to the whole world.

And so the meaning of my life does not lie in my personal good, but in the fulfilment of the will of Him who sent me, His will consisting in increasing love in myself and in other men.

In this does my life and my good and the life and the good of all men consist.

My life is not mine, but His; from Him has it come, and to Him does it go.

In this does the meaning of the teaching consist.

I know who I am, what I have to do, and what will become of me. What more do I need ? I will rely on the Father, I will try to do what is imposed upon me. In this do my life and my good consist.

Such, in its simplest expression, is the meaning of Christ's teaching, as I understand it.

Why, then, should I drag the living Christ, who has risen from the dead, into this teaching ?

Of what use is he to me ?

You say, – and many say this,– that it is impossible to rely on one's own efforts, that it is impossible to rely on oneself.

Pardon me, but this is only words, which have no meaning whatsoever for me, nor for you, either. That a man must not rely upon himself may be said by a materialist, who imagines man as a concatenation of mechanical forces, which are subject to laws that govern matter; but for you and me, as for any religious man, there is a living force, a divine spark, which is implanted in the body and lives in it. God has sent this particle of Himself into my body, hoping that it would do His work. How, then, can I help relying upon Him ?

God relies upon me, so how can I help relying upon Him ?

Man's life is his activity, – a man may save or ruin his soul.

Christ's whole teaching is nothing but a teaching as to what a man must do; he must not mutter, " Lord, Lord ! " but do his

commandments, be perfect as the Father is perfect, be merciful, be meek, be self-sacrificing.

Who will do all this, if man himself 'will not ? But to do this, a man must hope to be able to do it.

If by the words, "not to rely upon oneself," is meant that a man should not be sure that he will do everything he wishes to do, that he will attain the perfection toward which he is striving; that he should not pride himself on what he has done, but should be like a labourer who has come from the field; if by this we are to understand that everything good which there is in man is only that which is divine, then, in that sense, one should not rely upon oneself.

And of what use can such a strange theory be, which impresses people with the ide^ that they should not rely upon what actually exists and of the existence of which they may constantly convince themselves through experience : they must not rely on having efforts of their own which help a man to move forward, but must rely on what is not and never was, and of the existence of which no one can be convinced, - on the fantastic help of a fantastic being.

Pardon me, if I, speaking thus, offend you ; but I do not wish in such an important matter to keep from saying the whole truth, as I see it.

I write to you with love, but do not wish to conceal what I am thinking.

I am standing with one foot in the grave, and I have no reason to feign.

I feel also like answering the question which naturally arises: " If it is an untruth, whence comes this conception of the resurrection of Christ, of his aid to men, of the resurrection of men, and so forth ?"

I think that this is due to the fact that the essence of Christianity consists in the establishment by each separate man of his relation to the infinite, to the beginning of everything, to the beginning of my own life also, to God, to the Father.

Having come to understand life as Christ has taught us to understand it, man, as it were, extends a thread upwards from himself to God, binds himself with Him and, sundering all the collateral threads that united him with men (even as Christ commands), holds only by the divine thread and is guided by it through life.

And so I think that what happens is that some people, having established their relation to God, having united with Him by the thread, at the same time are dissatisfied with what God asks of them, and, having by reflection formed a conception of what the true Christian life ought to be, do not place themselves in the position

in which the thread which unites them with God has put them, but in that which they imagine true Christians must take up in the presence of other men.

Such people, who have generally sundered their former side threads, which unite them with men, to maintain themselves in this situation, which does not result from the immediate relation to God, but which they have imagined to themselves, get into new relations with men, take up new collateral threads, which maintain them in their chosen position.

And so it happens that the divine thread weakens more and more, and it appears to men that to continue the life which they have begun on this height, which frequently does not correspond to the inner necessity on which they have grounded their life, the only immediate relation to God is no longer necessary, but that they need, on the one hand, the conception of " faith " as something supernatural, special, which would maintain them in the position chosen by them; but as it is impossible for one man to believe in what does not exist they, on the other hand, need an external union of men, who should try to believe alike in what is not, and should support one another on the chosen path, encouraging one another by condemning people for transgressions against given rules and by approving others for executing them.

Thus do I explain the simultaneous tendency of many people toward mystical conceptions and toward external union.

September, 1892.

II.

god's work

1

What do I do when I want to change a bristle into a cobbler's thread ?

How do I treat these articles ?

With the greatest attention, care, tenderness, almost love.

What does the watchmaker do as he puts together a watch, if he is a master and indeed knows how to make a watch ?

All his fingers are busy: some of them hold a wheel; others place an axle in position, and others again move up a peg. All this he does softly, tenderly. He knows that if he rudely sticks one thing into another, and even if he presses a little too hard on one part, forgetting another part, the whole will go to pieces, and that he had better not attend to this matter, if he cannot devote all his forces to it.

I say all this for this purpose:

At first people live not knowing why; they live only for their enjoyment, which takes the place of their question, " What for ? " but later there comes a time for every rational being, when it asks " What for ? " and receives that answer which Christ gave and which we all know, " To do God's work."

Is it possible God's work is less important, or less complicated, than bristles or a watch ?

Is it possible God's work may be done at haphazard, and all come out right ?

In a watch one cannot press too hard upon a part needed; but the defenders of the worldly life say, " What is the use of being finical: if a thing does not fit in, bang it with the hammer, and it will go in." It does not matter to them that the rest will all be flattened. They do not see this.

It is impossible to work over a watch without giving it full attention and, so to speak, love for all its parts. Is it possible that one may do God's work in such a way ?

It is all very well for a man to do God's work at haphazard (that is, not to live in love with his brothers), if he does not believe fully that his work is God's work. But when he comes to believe that the meaning of his life consists in nothing but cooperating for the union of men he cannot help but abandon himself to Him whose work he is doing; he can no longer without attention, care, or love treat all men with whom he comes in contact, because all men are wheels, pegs, and cogs of God's work.

The difference between such a man and a watchmaker is only this, that the watchmaker knows what will result from all the parts; but a man, in doing God's work, does not know, does not see the external side of the work. A man is rather an apprentice, who hands, cleans, oils, and partly unites the component parts of the watch, which is unknown to him in form, but known in its essence (the good).

I want to say that a man who believes that his life is the fulfilment of God's work ought to labour until he gets seriousness, attention, care in his relations with men, – such caution as will make squeaking, force, breakage impossible, and all will always be soft and loving, not for his own pleasure, but because this is the only condition under which God's work is possible.

When this condition is wanting, one or the other is necessary, – to attain this condition, or to throw up God's work and stop deceiving oneself and others.

As the watchmaker stops his work the moment there is some grating or squeaking, so also must a believer stop as soon as there is an inimical relation to a man, and he must know that, no matter how

little important this man may seem to him, there is nothing more important for him than his relation to this man, so long as there is a squeaking between them.

And this is so, because a man is an indispensable wheel in God's work, and so long as he does not enter amicably where he ought to enter the whole work comes to a stop.

The relations among men make it obligatory upon them to find in each of them and in themselves " the son of man," to unite with him, – to evoke in themselves and in him a desire to approach him, that is, love.

I shall be told, " this is hard to find."

All you have to do is to act like the watchmaker: tenderly, carefully, not for yourself, but for the work, and it will come to you naturally.

A disunion takes place for no other reason than that I want by force to drive an axle into the wrong wheel.

If it does not fit one way or another, mend yourself: there is a place for it, – it is necessary and will do the work somewhere.

As you attain your aim and get the better of the work in making boots or watches, not by a tension of strength, but by care, by tenderness of treatment, so it is also with the treatment of men. And not only is it so, but as many times more so, as a man is more complex and more delicate than a watch.

It is not possible to work one's feelers out sufficiently well to treat people with them. And the longer and so the thinner these feelers are, the more powerfully do they move people.

I wish that a man who is near to me should not lead an idle and luxurious life.

I can, with my rudeness, take away from him the possibility of luxury and compel him to work. If I do so, I shall not advance God's work one hair's breadth, – I shall not move the man's soul.

If I extend my feelers more finely and farther out, I shall prove logically and incontestably to him that he is a dissipated and despised man. And with this I shall not advance God's work, but shall only live with him in communion, seeking out and strengthening everything which unites us, and keeping away from everything which is foreign to me. And if I myself do God's work and live by it, I shall more certainly than death draw this man to God and cause him to do God's work.

We have become so accustomed in the worldly life to attain our aims by means of the stick of power, of authority, or even by means of the stick of logical thought, that we want to do the same in God's

work.

But one stick jumps upon another.

But God's work is done with very delicate feelers, for which there are no obstacles.

2

Went to see a sick beggar. Terrible poverty.

It is remarkable how we have worked out in ourselves methods of cruelty. What I ought really to have done would have been to have remained there and not have gone away, until he was made equal with me.

3

The highest happiness is to give oneself to others.

And this is confirmed in work – enduringly and in the act – with concentration.

Yes, this is so, but for this the work must be in correspondence with the need; but if the need is higher than the work, this need will be exaggerated, as indeed it is.

Consequently everything is again in the work.

Our main misfortune is in our needing more than we work, and so we become entangled in life.

To work more than we need cannot be harmful, – it is the highest law.

4

As the fire destroys the candle, so the good destroys the personal life.

As the wax melts before the face of fire, so the consciousness of the personal life is destroyed by participation in the good.

You do good only when you renounce yourself.

The scarecrow of death stands only before those who do not know the good.

Death destroys the body, as the scaffolding is destroyed after the building is up and finished. And he whose building is up rejoices at the destruction of the scaffolding and of the body.

Life is for God the erection of His building, – the joy of salvation.

For God there takes place the work of the illumination of the world through man's intellect. For man there is the joy of life which ascends higher and higher.

5

The world lives. In the world there is life.

Life is a mystery for all men.

Some call it God, others say, " Force."

All the same, – it is a mystery.

Life is diffused through everything. Everything lives together, and everything lives apart: man lives, a worm lives.

This separate life science calls an organism. This stupid word is obscure.

What they call an organism is the force of life, individualized in time and space, which irrationally puts forth the demand of the common life for its individuality.

This individualization of life bears a contradiction in itself. It excludes everything else. Everything else excludes it. By its tendencies toward life it destroys itself.

Every step, every act of life is a dying.

This contradiction would be insoluble, if there were no intellect in the world. But the intellect is in man. It is this which destroys the contradiction.

One man would eat up another, if he had no intellect, which shows him that for his good it is better to be in love with this man and together with him to kill animals for food. The same intellect shows him that it is better for him not to kill animals, but to be in a state of love with them and to live on their products. The same intellect will further point in this direction and will destroy the contradiction of the egoism.

Out of the enormous world of beings that devour one another, man alone is endowed with reason (love also), which is to destroy all this contradiction of egoism.

One would think this is so little for so great a matter.

It is the same as though one should say, " How small one spark is, to burn up a whole forest."

If the fire spark is a burning material, it is sufficient, no matter how small it may be. All that is needed is the burning material: it

need only exist, and must not be destroyed.

So also the world of the contradictory egoism of the beings, to keep them from destroying another, is endowed with one of the egoistical tendencies, – flowering, fructification, and in man – the lust of the sexual act. And the world lives, presenting an imperishable material of the activity of reason – love, for the activity which destroys the egoism of the beings.

The world can wait: the material is not destroyed, – it will always exist, – and there is a spark of lire.

God, or Nature, gives what is indispensable, but only what is indispensable for his aims. Nature, or God, always acts alike. He, or it, never does what is finished, but gives the possibility of completing, – not a tree, but a seed.

For God, for Nature, there is no time.

When there is a possibility for something, there is what ought to be.

The same is true with the realization of the destruction of the contradiction of the egoism of the beings by means of the activity of reason. There is the possibility, and so there is the realization, there is tins, as the prophet says, that the lion will lie with the lamb. We may further say that not one animal will crush an insect or a plant.

For a man who has not come to recognize his rational nature there is a full satisfaction in the life of the egoistical contradiction. He then does not see it. He follows the lower law of God, or of Nature; but the moment he has come to recognize his rational nature, the contradiction of his inner life poisons him. He cannot live by it, and he surrenders himself to another law of reason, – to love; now the aim of love is the destruction of the contradiction. Having abandoned himself to this new law, he receives his full satisfaction.

For the rational being there is no other activity, no other life, but the one which has the destruction of the contradiction for its aim. This activity will bring him out of his personality and will cause him to renounce himself ; it will take him into the common life, into the service of that God, or of that Nature, for which there is no time.

Man's problem in this life is to renounce everything which is in itself contradictory, that is, personal, egoistical, in order to be able to serve reason, to destroy the inner contradiction of life, in which alone he finds satisfaction, security, fearlessness, and peace before death. If he does not fulfil this problem, he remains in the inner contradiction of the personal life and destroys himself, just as any contradiction destroys itself.

We talk of the future life, of immortality.

What is immortal is only what is not I.

Reason. Love. God. Nature.

June, 1886.

6

It is necessary that we should have strength to do God's work.

It is necessary that there should be a tree with flowers and seeds for the attainment of those infinite purposes which it attains, – shade, and food for insects, and food for plants, and the continuation of its species.

Well, does God do all these things with His own force ?

Should Nature break up into an infinite quantity of forces for the attainment of all its ends ?

No. In the tree is implanted, or in the tree there is a force of life, and it is this which creates everything; creating itself, it attains all its ends. A separate, personal force of life is given it for the attainment of all its ends.

Only (how can I express this more clearly ?) the deception of its personal life incites the tree to serve the world. Intending to live for itself, the tree works, grows, fructifies, serves the world, and (so it appears to us) does not know it.

The same is true of all lives, – animals, men.

I do not know how it is with the others, but I, a man, and some other people who live with me and have lived before me, recognize this deception.

Man seems to be endowed with the ability which reveals the deception to him. It is as though God, or Nature, made him a participant in the secret and permitted him to take a glance into the mechanism of the work.

Man has taken a glance into it, – how can he help it ?

How is he to make peace with his situation ?

His whole life and his striving toward life is a deception. With all his strivings he is nothing but an instrument for the attainment of ends that are foreign to him.

A commander sends an army of soldiers where they will certainly be killed, but he does not tell them so. If they knew for sure, they would not go. The commander says that there is a risk, but that a

great reward, a great joy awaits them. They believe him, and they go. But in the life of men the situation is much worse. It says clearly to all of them (thinking men) that they will inevitably die in great suffering, and that they are only instruments for ends that are foreign to them, and they are unable to believe in all the rewards, which have been promised them only by feeble-minded men, on account of the hopelessness of their condition.

Is the condition of men really so terrible ?

It is, for the very reason that they are given an intellect which points out the destination of their personal life in the world; it is terrible for the very reason that they are admitted to the mysteries of God, or of Nature.

Reason lifts for us a part of the curtain. We have seen and we see that we do not live for ourselves. That reason which is admitted to the mysteries of God, or of Nature, which is inseparably connected with that personal life that lives only by that personal life and does not understand a life which is not for itself, is terrified at this life as at something foreign to it.

My reason, which is admitted to God's mysteries, is I.

And I am my personal life. And both these egos are united into one.

I know that I am living for myself, and I want to eat.

Reason says, and it cannot help saying, because it sees this in everything living: " I do not live for myself."

The personal life says: " But I want to live for myself."

Reason does not contradict the personal life, but answers to its demand for a personal happiness: " Everything lives and seeks the personal good not for itself."

But reason cannot help but see that the personal life of a tree, of an animal, and so my own life, wants to eat, and will be only tools, means for the attainment of the greatest ends with the least effort (as Nature always does), means for the common life, the one reason strives after.

7

"When the connection between this life and the other is established, everything becomes easy and joyous.

8

At a certain stage of the spiritual development man must refrain from intensifying in himself the feeling of personal compassion for another being. This feeling is in itself of an animal nature, and in a sensitive man it always manifests itself in sufficient strength

without artificial incitement.

What one ought to encourage in oneself is spiritual compassion. The soul of a beloved man must always be dearer to me than the body. I must remember that it is better that a beloved man should now, in my presence, die for having declined to kill even a mad dog, than that he should die after many years from eating too much, and should outlive me.

There is no force in books. The chief force is in the Christian life according to the teaching of truth.

Glorifications, interpretations, prayers, mysteries, discussions, definitions, divine services, – there has been enough of all that and at all times and in all forms, and people's teeth are set on edge by it. Now another problem begs for recognition in the Christian world, – the problem of the realization in life of the Christian worldconception ; questions of ownership, of war, of punishment, of power, of prostitution are now the questions of the day. For the last twenty years it has been noticed how humanity, burying itself in these questions, has been endeavouring to answer them.

This solution, it seems to me, now begins to be given.

Men, as it were, are beginning to make attempts at applying to life what they confess.

It is these separate phenomena which interest me, and to them I intended to devote what very small particle of life seems to be left to me.

10

I am not afraid of a candle that is not burning, but of one that is, and not because its fire is not the real one, but because it is the property of fire to flame up and go out. •

11

Remember how often Christ has said, " The Father has sent me. I am sent. I do the will of Him who has sent me."

These words have always been obscure to me.

God could not have sent God, and I did not understand any other meaning, or understood it obscurely.

Only now has the simple, clear, and joyous meaning of these words been revealed to me. I arrived at the comprehension of them through doubt and suffering. Without this teaching there is no solution to those doubts which torment every disciple of Christ.

Their meaning is this, that Christ has taught all men the life which

he considered the true one for himself. But he considers his life an embassy, a fulfilment of the will of Him who sent him.

But the will of Him who sent is the rational (good) life of the whole world. Consequently, it is the business of life to carry the truth into the world.

Life has, according to Christ's teaching, been given to man with his reason for no other purpose than that he should carry this reason into the world, and so man's whole life is nothing but this rational activity turned upon other beings in general, and not merely upon men.

Thus Christ understood his life, and thus he taught us to understand ours.

Each of us is a power which is conscious of itself, – a flying stone which knows whither it flies and why, and is glad because it flies and knows that it is nothing, – a stone, – and that all its meaning is in this flight, this force which has thrown him, – that his whole life is this force.

Indeed, outside this view, that is, that every man is a messenger of the Father, called into life only for the purpose of doing His will, – outside this view life has not only no meaning, but is also detestable and terrible. And, on the contrary, it is enough to become well familiarized and one with this view of life, and life not only acquires a meaning, but also becomes joyous and significant. Only with this view are all doubts, struggles, and terrors destroyed.

If I am God's messenger, my chief business does not only consist in fulfilling the five commandments, – they are only conditions under which I must fulfil the ambassadorship, – but in living in such a way as to carry into the world with all means given me that truth which I know, that truth which is entrusted to me.

It may happen that I shall myself often be bad, that I shall be false to my mission; all this cannot for a moment destroy the meaning of my life : " To shine with that light which is in me, so long as I am able, so long as there is light in me."

Only with this teaching are destroyed the idle regrets as to there not being or having been what I wished, and the idle desire for something definite in the future; there is destroyed the terror of death, and the whole of life is transferred into the one present. Death is destroyed by this, that, if my life has blended with the activity of introducing reason and the good into the world, the time will come when the physical annihilation of my personality will cooperate with what has become my life, – the introduction of the good and of reason into the world.

The conviction of the ambassadorship has the following practical effect upon me (I speak for myself and, I know, for others also):

Outside the physical necessities, in which I try to confine myself to the least, as soon as I am drawn to some activity, – speaking, writing, working, – I ask myself (I do not even ask, I feel it) whether with this work I serve Him who sent me. I joyously surrender myself to the work and forget all doubts and – fly, like a stone, and am glad that I am flying.

But if the work is not for Him who has sent me, it does not even attract me, I simply feel ennui, and I only try to get rid of it, I try to observe all the rules given for messengers.

But this does not even happen.

It seems to me that a man can live in such a way as to sleep, or in such a way as with his whole soul, with delight, to serve Him who has sent him.

12

Christ has conquered the world and has saved it, because he has suffered with love and joy, that is, has conquered suffering and has taught us to do the same.

I know this, but am still unable to learn it, although I see for sure that I am moving in this direction.

May God help all men to do the common work, the work of love, by word, deed, abstinence, effort: here, not to speak a bad word, not to do what would be worse; there, to overcome timidity and false shame, and to do what is necessary, what is good, – what is loving.

All tiny, imperceptible acts and words, – but from these mustard-seeds grows the tree of love which with its branches shades the whole world.

This work may God aid us to do with our friends, with our enemies, with strangers, in moments when our mood is the highest, and in moments when it is the lowest.

And it will be well for us, and it will be well for everybody.

III.

FORM AND EXISTENCE

1

Men cannot live without establishing for themselves a form of life to conform with the degree of their morality, but every form of life, from that of an English lord to that of an agricultural peasant, is in itself not only carrion, but a hindrance to the true life. From this it does not follow that it is necessary to live without any definite form, without a plan of life (a man cannot do

this), but that we must not only refrain from esteeming the plan, but must also fear it like the fire.

The true life is only in the relations between men.

In the worldly life everything is in the form, and the relations among men are completely sacrificed to form.

But even in the most moral life this temptation always accompanies man.

I want to finish the exposition of this thought, and a recruit comes to bid me good-bye.

To finish is the form, the plan; and the recruit is the man and my relations to him, – it is true life. This will not interfere with my ending my writing, if I am alive, and so forth.

I shall look at my life: how many various forms of life I have established for myself!

What is left of them ?

Nothing.

And what is left of the past life, – of my relations to men ?

For the forty years of my worldly life I established hardly any relations to men, because I lived for the sake of form.

And during the short years when I lived without form, how many dear relations, with which it is a joy to live and to die!

November, 1886.

2

How joyous and how contrary to all human works is this, that on the divine path there is no weariness, nor cooling off, nor, much more, any return.

I see this in the case of all those few men whom I know and who have entered upon this path.

It is frequently hard and agonizing, in a worldly sense, and the farther on the harder and the more agonizing.

There is no hope of a realization of anything in this world, in our lifetime; and never, not only any question as to whether my path will betray me, but even any doubt, no wavering, no regrets.

This is that one, true, narrow path.

No matter where and how comfortably and how agreeably I may walk,

there can always be a doubt whether I am on the path. There is none on the one, true path. On all other paths there are diversity and disputes; but on this one there is complete unity, not only with those who think and speak alike, but also with all those who understand it, each in his own way.

The Pashkovians, Orthodox, Catholics, condemn me; they, the Christians, frequently, contrary to Christ's teaching, cause me pain, but I not only do not condemn them (I am not speaking for argument's sake, but sincerely, for I cannot feel otherwise), but even hail them on the true path, every time when they stand upon it, rejoice at their successes and am unable to express my feelings for them, so much do I love them.

Lately I read a newspaper, L'Arniee du Salut.

The form of expression is strange and incomprehensible to me, but their activity, which leads to abstinence, to love, to paying attention to Christ's teaching, incites love for them and joy in me.

Lately, as I read the articles in the Salvation Army, I explained to myself their activity and spiritual condition, and my relation to them.

They take people who have departed from Christ back to him. It is nice of them to do so, and nothing more can be expected of them.

He who has come to the spring of living water and who has thirst will himself find what to do with the water and how to drink it. Their mistake consists in this, that they insist upon the form, upon the necessity of drinking the water in this way, and not in that, and in such and such a situation. And this mistake harms them the more since they have never thought of the methods of drinking the water, and take the long-worn tradition, which has proved inconvenient in practice.

My relation to them is awfully strange. By searchings, sufferings, and, of course, above all else, by God's mercy, I was led to the spring. I had been dying and I began to live, and I live by this water alone; suddenly men come to this spring. I hail them with enthusiasm and love, and instead, not of love, but of simple absence of malice, which I had hoped to find, I find condemnation and rejection, and the injunction that, before drinking, I must pass through the psychological processes, which are not proper for me, but through which they have passed, – renounce the consciousness of life and of happiness, which the living water gives me, and recognize the fact that I am doing it only out of fear of the pastors who have called me to the drinking.

I do not say that they, or any one else, ought to travel on the same path with me.

The point is not how I arrived, but what I arrived at.

If we have come to Christ and want to live by him alone, we will not quarrel.

3

The question of prayer and of aid according to prayer. This question has of late interested me.

I now feel every day the necessity of praying, of asking God's aid.

This necessity is natural (at least to those of us who have been accustomed to it from childhood), and I think it is natural to all men.

To feel one's weakness and to seek outside aid, that is, not merely through a struggle with evil, but to try to find methods by which it would be possible to vanquish evil, this is called praying.

To pray does not mean to employ methods which deliver one from evil, but among the methods which deliver there is also the action which is called prayer.

The peculiarity of prayer, as compared with all other methods, consists in this, that it is agreeable to God.

If this is true, then, in the first place, the question arises why prayer, that is, an action which is pleasing to God and saves me from evil, must be expressed in words only, or in obeisances, which do not last long, as is generally assumed. Why can prayer not be expressed by continuous motions of the body, say of the feet only, – the wandering of the pilgrim is a prayer of the feet, – and if I go and work a whole day or a whole week for a poor widow, will this be prayer ?

I think it will.

In the second place, prayer is a request for the realization of some external or internal desire. For example, I ask that my children may not die, or that I may be freed from vice, my weakness. Why shall I turn to the incomprehensible and great God with such prayers which can be fulfilled by His manifestations upon earth, – by men, who are united in the fulfilment of His will (the church in the true meaning of this word) ?

Everything for which I have prayed may be fulfilled by men and by me. I feel like praying, and I pray with words. But is it not better for me to widen the concept of prayer ? Is it not better for me to try to find the causes of this vice and to find that divine activity, not of an hour, but of days and months, which may be that saving activity that counteracts my vice ?

And I found it for myself.

I am sensuous, and I lead an idle, voluptuous life, and I pray.

Would it not be better for me to change my godless life, to work for others, to satisfy my body less, – to get married, if I am not ? It will turn out that my whole life is a prayer, and this prayer will certainly be fulfilled.

But more than this: the very necessity of prayer – of a supplication of direct aid from a living being – is satisfied in the simplest, non-supernatural manner. I am weak and bad, and I know what I suffer from.

I reveal my weakness to another and ask Him to help me, and He, at times by His mere presence, serves as an impediment to the development of this vice.

I do so.

Prayer directed to God, I shall be told, can that be bad ?

Of course not. I not only do not regard it as bad, but myself from old habit pray, though I do not consider this important. What is important is what God wants from you and what God has given you tools for. And so if I had the means for saving myself by means of certain acts, or by means of other men, and I did none of these things, and only prayed to God, I should feel that I did wrong.

One more thing about prayer, and the main thing.

Remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan, "Men must worship God in spirit and in truth." The true translation for " in truth " is " by deeds."

This is one of those texts which, as Arnold says, ought to stand in the first place.

4

I stood in the forest.

I began to tell my fortune as I tore off the petals of a flower: " Immense, great, medium, half-and-half, small, very small, insignificant."

Twice it turned out, " Very small."

I have outlived this habit of telling fortunes, but this " very small" interested me.

This is certainly the best I can wish.

The greatest is always very small.

For God every act is very small. And it is the right act.

One only needs to do good around oneself, – to give joy to men

around oneself, – without any aim, – and this is a great aim.

5

I have thought on the gradualness of the demands of Nature, – of food and labour, of the collecting of the seed and its return, and, as it seems to me, of the collecting of knowledge and its transmission.

But love does not enter into this series, because love is life itself, which is attained through the natural gratification of these demands.

6

I read Medor's work on civilization. He divides it beautifully into four parts: (1) the material, (2) the physical, (3) the mental, and (4) the moral.

But civilization is the substitution of mental factors for physical ones, and of moral factors for mental ones.

This is confused, but it is the truth.

Civilization is a word, and it is quite unnecessary to define it. The truth is, that the greatest good of men is invariably attained by the application to life of those factors by which the good is acquired in the best manner possible.

As it is stupid to lift up with the hand what may be raised with a lever, so it is stupid to maintain one's relations and defend one's independence by means of war, when this very end is attained by means of a moral life.

7

We reproach God, we feel sorrow, because we meet obstacles in the realization of Christ's teaching.

Well, how would it be if all of us were without domestic disagreements ?

"We should come together and live happily and joyously."

Well, and others ?

"Others would not even know."

We want to collect the fire in one small heap, so that it may burn more easily. But God has scattered the fire in the wood.

They are busy, but we are worrying, because they are not burning.

8

None of us is called to destroy all the sufferings of men, but only to serve men.

People always ask, " What is evil for ? "

What is evil ?

What we call evil is a challenge addressed to us, a demand made upon our active love. The man who will reply to these demands of the activity of love will see precisely as much evil as he needs in order to provoke his activity.

Thus I think and feel now, but only lately I saw very much evil, and I was vexed and in despair, and so I prescribe the recipe which has helped me.

The moment you see an evil, even the smallest, try to mend it, to diminish it, and you will never see much evil at once and will not arrive at despair, and the hands will not drop, and you will do much good.

January, 1887.

9

The chief error of men is this, that it seems to each in particular that the guide of his life is a striving after enjoyment and an aversion to suffering. And a man, all alone, without any guidance, surely renders himself to this guide: he seeks enjoyment and avoids suffering, and in this does he place the aim and meaning of life.

But a man can never live in enjoyment, and cannot avoid suffering. Consequently the purpose of life does not lie in this.

If it did he in this, – what insipidity !

The purpose is enjoyments, and they do not exist and cannot exist.

And if they did exist, the end of life is death, which is always conjugate with suffering.

If sailors decided that their aim is to avoid the rise of the waves, whither would they sail ?

The end of life is outside enjoyments. It is attained by passing through them.

This transition from enjoyments to sufferings is the respiration of life, inspiration and expiration, the taking of food and the giving it back.

To set as one's aim the enjoyments and to avoid suffering means to lose the path which cuts through them.

August, 1887.

10

Where, then, and of what character, is the law under which we live ?

Do not say that it is the law of this, that your body should fare well, – eat, drink, cohabit, watch its own children. This is not a law, but the demands of the flesh, the very demands for which a law is needed.

Cattle have no law – they have all the same lusts.

They all want the same.

To avoid this, that men, wishing to eat the same, to sleep with the same woman, should kill one another off, and so should none of them have enough, to eat and sleep they must divide up, must establish a law. And to divide up, lust must be limited. So the law is born among men as to how to limit lust.

As many lusts as there are, so many laws are there.

For a law is nothing but a vanquishing, a subjugation of lust for the sake of another man. And there are many such laws in the heart of every man.

Cattle have no law, and have no need of it.

Well or ill, man cannot live without law: the law is written within him, and there has never been a man without law.

When there was but the one Adam (it makes no difference whether he existed or not), and there was but one man on earth, he could have lived without any law. He alone had lusts, and they did not interfere with any one, but as soon as there were two or three men, the lusts came into conflict:

" I want to eat this apple !"

" And so do I!"

One man killed another with a stone; a third man appears, and he will not let the matter rest. His soul will tell him whether the man who killed the brother did well or ill.

Having found the law in your heart, do not say that there is no law. The law is written in your heart.

If you lived but one day with men and performed deeds, and looked at their deeds, you would find the law. And even now there is not a human deed on which you have not a judgment in your soul according to your law, and there is not any deed of yours for which you do not

know a law.

If you say, " There is no law," you merely say that there are now so many laws, and that they are so senseless that it is impossible to make them out. And there are laws, and many of them at that, one of which commands what the other forbids. There are, besides, statutes which do not vanquish the lusts, but determine how the lusts are to be gratified, and these statutes are also called laws, so that men live in this world of laws and statutes at haphazard, without following any law, mixing up the statutes with the laws and living exclusively according to the commands of the lusts.

Whether you live according to the law or according to the lusts, do not forget that there is a law; and not one law, but an infinitude of laws, and we follow thousands of them, and without them a man has never lived and could never live. But there have come to be so many laws, and we have become so entangled in them, that we can live according to the lust, selecting such laws as are convenient to us, and substituting other laws for such as are not convenient for us.

Laws cannot help but exist.

Let two men live together two days, and they will have laws, and millions of millions have lived five thousand years together, and should they have found no laws ?

All this is foolish, and there is no sense in talking about it.

I now live in my house, the children study and play, my wife works, I write. All this is done only because there are laws, which are recognized by all men. No stranger comes to live in my house, because it is mine, and according to the tenth commandment no one should wish for what belongs to another.

The children study what I command them to study,— according to the fourth commandment.

My wife is free from temptations, according to the seventh.

I work as much as I can, according to the fourth.

I have quoted the commandments of Moses from old habit, but I could mention thousands of laws of the civil and of the common law which half confirm the same.

But, if I want, I can at once find even such laws and customs as abrogate these.

I will say, " Why have you a house ? Christ, who showed us an example of life, did not have a place to lean his head against. Why have you a house, when there are poor people without a home ? Why have you a house, since it says that you should have no care ?"

I will say, " Why care for the children ? Not one hair will fall

from their heads without the will of the heavenly Father. What sense is there in teaching them, since those who are poor in spirit are blessed ? ”

I will simply say, " Why teach them pagan wisdom, since you are a Christian ?"

I will say, " Why teach for ambition's sake, if it is better to work the earth ? Why have you a wife, when it is better not to get married ? Why have you a wife, when it says, < He that shall not forsake his wife is not worthy of me ' ? ”

" Why do you work, why write ? This is contrary to humility, and contrary to refraining from worldly cares."

Thus, if I left my house, wife, children, work, I should also be doing according to the divine law and should be finding for my confirmation and justification civil and common laws. It is possible to leave wife and children, and to go to a monastery. It is possible to leave wife and children, to get a divorce, to marry another, and to commit debauchery, – and for everything to find a confirmation in divine and civil laws, – thus, do whatever you please, – and for everything a law will be found.

It is in this condition that we are, and that is not good.

Not that there is no law, but that there are now too many of them, and that men have become too painfully clever.

11

Man is flesh, has life and reason, and develops.

It is all very well to say that a rope develops, a germ develops in the egg, but it is unscrupulous to apply this word to a man.

If you are a man, you live.

And so do not go on talking of development, but simply look at yourself and say what you are doing, having life and reason.

If you do so, you will answer that you are looking for rational choice among all the demands of your flesh.

In this alone does all our life consist.

12

(From Lao-Tse)

When a man is born, he is frail and weak; when he is strong and powerful, he dies.

When a tree is born, it is frail and tender; when it is dry and

brittle, it dies.

Strength and power are the accompaniments of death.

Frailty and weakness are the accompaniments of life, because what is strong does not conquer.

When a tree has become strong, it is cut down.

What is strong and great, is insignificant.

What is frail and weak, is great.

13

A Jewish emigrant came.

He wants to find what there is in common between Jews and Russians, which would unite them.

This has long ago been found.

At times I feel sorry because the wood does not burn. As though, if it burned in my presence, at once, this would not serve as a clear proof, a clear sign, of this, that it is not the wood that is burning, but the kindling; but the wood has not yet caught fire.

14

Where people are angry, there it is not good.

A child recognizes this instinctively and goes away from such a place. A child does not become angry itself, does not become vexed at the manifestation of anger in others, and its joys and occupations in life are not impaired by it.

15

I have read Confucius and have made notes.

The Chinese religio-rational explanation of power and the teaching about it has been a revelation to me.

Things that were obscure are getting clearer and clearer to me.

True power cannot be based on violence, nor on tradition. It can be based only on the unity of the recognition of this height by all men.

Power will be no violence only when it is recognized as morally and rationally the highest.

Power, as violence, arises when we recognize as highest what is not the highest according to the demands of our heart and reason.

The moment a man (be he a father or a king, or be it a legislative assembly) submits to what he does not fully respect, there appears violence.

When what I consider the highest has become not the highest, and I condemn it, I generally have recourse to two methods:

(1) I myself stand higher than what was the highest, – I subject it to myself (the quarrels of sons and fathers, revolutions).

(2) In spite of the fact that the highest has ceased to be the highest, I purposely continue to consider it the highest (Confucianism, Slavophilism).

Both means are terrible, and the most terrible of the two is the latter, because it leads up to the first.

There is one way out:

I do not consider this or that high, and so must not act in such a way.

I consider this or that the highest, and so I must act in such a way.

16

A man who does something bad is not evil, but frequently is even good: kings, soldiers.

But a man who does something bad and knows that it is bad, a doubting man, – he is bad indeed.

These are the only bad ones in the world.

17

The ministration to others begins with the ministration to oneself.

If we are to believe that man's aim and duty consists in serving his neighbour, we must also arrive at this, how we should serve our neighbour, – we must work out the rules how we are to serve in our position.

For us in our position to serve, we must first of all stop demanding other people's service.

It seems strange, but the first thing we have to do, before anything else, is to serve ourselves, that is, to make our own fires, fetch our own water, cook our own dinners, and wash our own dishes and dirty linen –

In this way shall we begin the ministrations to others.

18

All acts performed by a man may be divided into three categories.

One series of these consists of those which we perform without asking ourselves about them whether they are good or bad; we do them without noticing them.

Other acts are such as we, speaking with St. Paul, consider bad, but none the less perform; acts which we wish to perform, but do not always perform, or do not wish to perform, and yet perform them.

A third class of acts consists of such as we wish to perform and always perform, or do not wish to perform and never perform.

The acts of the first series are those which have not yet fallen under the judgment of our conscience, but of which, in measure as our life advances, a greater and ever greater number fall under our judgment and pass over to the second series.

The acts of the third series are such as have passed the judgment of our conscience and, dividing up into good and bad, into desirable and undesirable, have become the possession of our moral natures, – they are our interest of life, our only wealth, which is acquired by life. It is this, that before this I could fight, get drunk, fornicate, and so forth, and now not merely do not wish, but am unable to do so.

Thus the first series is the material for life's working over. The third series is what has already been prepared by life, what is lying in the storeroom. The second series is what is now on the work-table, what is being worked at.

And how remarkably happy and joyous is the condition of men! Whether men want it or not, this third series is being worked out in life: a man grows manly, and he grows wiser in intellect and experience; he grows older, the passions weaken, and the work of life is done.

But if the whole meaning, the whole aim of life is put into this work, we get constant joy, constant success.

Now, it is always possible to understand this and to recognize what acts belong to this or to that series, and to strain every attention toward the second series.

19

It is accepted to regard vexation at injustice, anger provoked by evil, as not only a noble and praiseworthy, but even a useful and necessary feeling, as a stimulus for a struggle with evil. But this is a great mistake.

Anger is not at all necessary.

Any one may practically convince himself of this from the fact that anger immediately disappears the moment a man undertakes to mend the results of the evil.

When a man is a witness to some injustice or cruelty, for example to a fight, in which the weak are worsted by the strong, he in his soul experiences anger against the offenders. He need but undertake to mend the consequences of the evil, he need but busy himself with the aim of diminishing the sufferings of the victims of the fight, he need but begin to tend to the wounds of the maimed, – and immediately the feeling of anger is allayed and gives way to a feeling of inner satisfaction and joy, which always accompany every ministrations to a neighbour. Thus it is always.

An angry incitement against evil is a sign that a man does not yet counteract evil with deeds, does not yet mend the results of the evil, though it may easily happen with this that he is struggling against evil in the most energetic manner possible.

20

In consequence of the comprehension of the spirit of Christianity, men are generally divided into Christians and non-Christians.

The grossest division consists in regarding only him who has been baptized as a Christian.

Another division, though less gross, consists in this, that he who on the basis of Christ's teaching lives a pure, domestic life, who is no murderer, etc., is called a Christian, in contradistinction to him who lives differently.

Both these divisions are equally incorrect.

In Christianity there is no line which separates a Christian from a non-Christian. There is light, the ideal, Christ, and there is darkness, the animal. There is a motion in the name of Christ, toward Christ, along a path indicated by his teaching.

And we are all somewhere, walking on this path.

21

We frequently deceive ourselves, thinking, when we meet revolutionists, that we are standing near each other, in the same row.

" There is no country !"

" There is no country."

" There is no ownership !"

" There is no ownership."

" There is no inequality ! "

" There is no inequality," and many more things. It seems to be one and the same thing.

But there is a great difference, and there are even no people farther removed from us than they are.

For a Christian there is no country, – for them country has to be destroyed.

For a Christian there is no property, – and they want to annihilate property.

For a Christian all are equal, – and they want to abolish inequality.

This is like the two ends of a snapped ring. The two ends are side by side, – they are not farther removed than all the other parts of the ring.

It is necessary to walk all around the ring, in order to connect what is on the ends.

22

I fully agree with your opinion that many people have needed solitude and fasting, in order to strengthen and try themselves; but I think (no doubt you, too, think so) that this cannot be a rule: some need solitude and fasting before any other trials, others do not need them.

With an equally sincere striving after the good and after truth, the paths over which people travel toward them may be quite different.

It seems to me that one of the chief causes of the disagreement of people is this, that each, walking on his own, familiar path toward truth, and seeing another man walking by another path toward the same goal (and there are as many paths as there are radii), is inclined to insist that the true path is only the one he is travelling upon.

In general the article on the fasters was interesting to me, because of late I have had occasion to read and think much about gluttony, and I think that one of the chief sins, the most common one and almost the radical one, on which grows up a mass of others, is

gluttony and belly-madness, – the desire to eat and drink for along time and as agreeably as possible.

In the article on fasts there is much which is superstitious and exaggerated, and a superfluous motive of fasting, which consists in the castigation of the body, but the hope through fasting to strengthen one's spiritual power seems untrue to me. But what is important is that a man now generally eats several times more than is necessary for the best manifestation of his forces (by forces I understand the most profitable relation, as far as the human activity is concerned, of his spiritual and his physical forces), and that therefore fasting, the conscious destruction of gluttony, is useful for all men,– that is, the accustoming oneself to the least amount of food, with which the most advantageous correlation is attained.

Now the most advantageous correlation is attained, I think, with the consumption of a much smaller amount of food than is in general considered necessary.

You say that it was most easy for you to vanquish the lust of feeding, but with me it was the very opposite. And I think that the lust of feeding is closely connected with the sexual lust and serves as its foundation.

You will perhaps say, " What shall be regarded as the most advantageous relation between the spiritual and the physical forces ? This concept is a relative one." I will not undertake to settle now definitely what this relation should be, but I know it for myself, and I think that everybody knows it. I know in myself the condition which most nearly approaches the one I should like to be in: a great clearness of thought, an ability to transfer myself into the condition of another man,– to understand it, – and physical lightness, a mobility, an absence of the consciousness of my body.

Now a certain amount of food removes me from this state, or brings me near to it. When I fast too much, my stomach is felt by me, – there are no clear ideas, no sympathy, though there is mobility. When I eat too much, everything is lost, – clearness of ideas, sympathy, and even mobility. And so I will always find that amount which is necessary, and it will always be less than the food usually taken by the majority of people.

If it shall seem to you that I am uselessly talking of such subjects, I must beg your pardon: I consider this subject, from its practical applications to life, unquestionably most important.

I more or less understand your world conception ; I say more or less, because it is impossible completely to express one's view of life. We understand each other's world conception, not because we express it in a common connection, but more in consequence of various incidental expressions of a concordant sympathy in respect to all kinds of questions.

I have several times before expressed the idea that union between men can be found only in the union with truth, with God; but the attempts at seeking a union with men, with certain, chosen men, shows either that men are unable, or unwilling, or too tired to seek a union with God, or do not believe in this, that the union with God will give them a union with men; or it weakens the striving after a union with God, and so is undesirable.

Besides, how can I know with whom I am to be in a very close union ?

By what signs shall I find out that I am to be in a union with John, and not with Peter, or with the monk Anthony, or with the Governor of Chernigov, or with the Krapfvensk horse-thief ?

The very project of an external union such as you propose is in reality a project of disunion : we must recognize that in the distance between Kharkov and Tula there are but two or three men who can understand us, and this is a sin, and an untruth, and it is unnecessary.

What unites us, and can unite us more, is a greater approximation to the perfection of the Father, which we are told to seek, and I am convinced that you, like me, and like all people, have experienced those transitions of moods of love, to which we all are near, and the union has taken place easily and joyfully from without. But the external union such as you propose will, in all probability, only disunite those who in this manner will attempt to unite. A union can exist only if we throw off everything which disunites, which can give a cause for temptation, as when, defending a fortress, the suburbs are burned, and if we leave only that which is eternal, common to all, and first of all necessary for us, and what this is, we all know.

And the more sincerely we shall live for the fulfilment of this, the more eternally shall we be in union, not only with a certain dozen of men, but with all the men of the world.

If we do not support one another, either materially, or spiritually; if we err; if we go away from one another and, above all, if we have no common aim, we cannot mend this by an artificial joining and by words said to one another. Union is possible only in truth, and in order to attain truth we must do one thing, – seek it with a constant, unceasing effort, " Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," and another thing: be meek, reject pride, self-love, your own opinion, and, above all else, reject all kinds of considerations, such as, for example, " If I believe thus, I shall be with the government, or with the people, or with the holy fathers, or with the church; if I believe thus, I can be justified before people and myself," or, that it is a pleasure to believe thus. All this has to be rejected, and you have to be prepared in advance for this, that the recognition of the truth will be disadvantageous to you, will humble you.

Assembling will not help in the recognition of the truth ; the only salvation is in an approach to it, and in this alone is the means for union. But an artificial union can only weaken the striving after truth.

Then again, who is to assemble for the seeking of the union, and who is to be aided materially and spiritually ?

Where is that stamp by which we recognize our people ?

Is it not a sin to segregate ourselves and others from / the rest, and is not this union with dozens a disunion from thousands and millions ?

And then again, the union which you seek, the union with God, is accomplished at a depth which frequently is not reached by our vision.

I am convinced that if one should ask an old man on his death-bed, for example, me, with whom I have been in a true, a most real union, I shall hardly name those whom I should name now.

The union with the dead is frequently greater than with the living.

Let us do what leads to union, let us approach God, but let us not think of union. It will be in proportion with our perfection, our love.

You say, " It is easier in company."

What is easier ? To plough, mow, drive piles, yes, is easier, but God can be approached only singly.

Only through God, as through the heart, is there a communication between all the parts of the body; but the direct communication, which does not pass through God, is only seeming. You have no doubt experienced this, and I, too, have experienced this.

What may seem strange is this, that with people with whom there exists a real communion through God, we have no reason for speaking, and do not feel like it; but we feel like speaking and pointing out and making things clear to those with whom we have not as yet any divine communion; with these we try to establish a communion despite the heart, but this cannot be done and is an idle occupation.

You say that it is better together, but it seems to me that this cannot be said, cannot be determined; we must do what God commands: if He brings us together, well and good; if He scatters us in every direction, again well and good. But as to what you say about " the farther steps," I now do not see these farther steps in a renunciation of self (this is in your case and in that of many men already done in consciousness), but in doing precisely the opposite of what you wish to do, not in segregating yourselves, but in

welding together; do the opposite, find the greatest means for communing with the whole great world of all men; find a communion in which, without making any compromises, you may commune, love, and be loved.

24

Principles, meaning by this word what ought to guide our whole life, are not to blame for anything, and without principles it is bad to live.

The trouble is this, that frequently that is made a principle which cannot be a principle, as, for example, the principle of a thorough steaming in a bath-house, and so forth. Not even the product of bread labour, as Bondardv says, can be a principle.

We have one common, fundamental principle, – love, not only in word and tongue, but in fact and truth, that is, with a loss, a sacrifice of one's life for the sake of God and one's neighbour.

From this common rule result the particular principles of meekness, humility, non-resistance to evil, as the consequence of which there will be agricultural, industrial, and even factory work for which there is the least number of competitors and the reward is smallest.

From all the circles where competition is great, a man who keeps Christ's teaching in fact, and not in words, will be pushed out, and he will involuntarily find himself among the labourers. Thus the labour condition of a Christian is the result of the application of a principle, – and not a principle. If people shall take for their basal principle to be labouring men, and shall not fulfil what leads to it, this will obviously lead to confusion.

I am fully agreed with you that to live by principles alone is pernicious, but I do not agree with you that it is possible to live without them, that is, without a mental activity which determines life.

It is just as pernicious to live in faith alone, as to live by one set of principles. One is so much connected with the other, that they are both parts of one whole, – of the moral forward movement.

To say that it is useless or pernicious to make a definition of life and to try to make reality conform with it, is the same as saying that it is useless and pernicious to put one foot forward without transferring to it all the weight of the body. Just as it is impossible to walk without putting a foot forward, and is impossible to walk by jumping on one foot, so it is impossible to move in life, without mentally defining the path, – without establishing principles and conforming life with them.

Both, that is, the principle determined in advance and the inevitable consequence, – faith, – are indispensable for motion. It is even difficult to separate one from the other, to say where one

begins and the other ends, just as in walking it is difficult to say on what foot I am resting at a given second, and which foot is moving me.

August, 1892.

IV.

#### THE OFFENCES OF THE UNDERTAKINGS OF LIFE

1

You have just had time to think, " I have conquered !" and are triumphant, when you are ready to fall into the ditch.

2

The most persistent offence, from which you will never rid yourself and which it is impossible to evade, but which one must know how to direct, is the offence of undertaking life in the future external forms.

Without doing so, it seems, we cannot live.

I begin to write a letter and I assume that I shall end it and shall say this or that. I build a house, etc. It is impossible to get along without doing so! But how shall we do it ?

In such a way that we shall never lose sight of the fact that human relations are more precious than the undertaking which we have entered upon.

The writing of a letter or a book, the ploughing of the field, the building of a house, all these are only forms of life; but life itself consists in the complex play of men's relations in these forms.

There may be an error in forms, but life, which may proceed in the most faulty forms, can always be holy, full, and fruitful.

November, 1886.

There is one teacher, Christ, and he teaches one thing, the fulfilment of the Father's will, not for the pleasure of men, but in order that we may be with Him, consequently may be happy and free.

The chief obstacle in this is in the malice and praise or the condemnation of men. This obstacle, if you are the least bit careless, takes the place of the seeking of the true good in the fulfilment of God's will.

4

To tempt God means, not to follow His law, His command.

But God's laws and commands are written on paper and are expressed in words. As regards these commands, doubt is possible, and great caution must be observed toward them.

Other commands are written in our hearts.

And we must not believe all these at once. Our hearts may be corrupt and may give their own commands out for God's.

But there are other commands, which are written both in books and in our hearts, and in all our beings, as, for example, food and food-producing labour, love of parents and children, and marital life productive of these conditions.

A man may do anything (he may even shoot himself), but he never can with impunity depart from the law, that is, there can be no doubt but that with this departure he will make himself worse and will not attain what he wanted.

5

Two things became clear to me yesterday, – one – of no importance, the other – of importance.

The first is of no importance.

I was afraid to say and think that all men – ninety-nine hundredths of them – are insane.

There is not only no reason for being afraid, but we cannot help but say and think so, if people act madly. If people lead a senseless city life, senselessly educate their children, abandon themselves to senseless luxury and idleness, they will certainly also talk senselessly.

The second is of importance.

If indeed I see (partially) by God's will, the senseless, sick world cannot approve of me for it.

If the world did approve of me, I should be ceasing to live according to God's will, but should be living according to the world's will.

I should be ceasing to see and seek God's will.

Such was Thy will.

6

The struggle with evil by means of violence is the same as an attempt to stop a cloud, in order that there may be no rain.

7

The main Christian teaching, the teaching of the truth, has in its application passed through all the stages of consciousness, of verbal expression, and of the excitation of the religious sentiment; all this has been done and worked over, and there is nothing new to be said or done here.

But the consciousness of truth only begins to demand a true vital application, and here the teaching, or the disciples of this teaching, like a mettled horse with a wagon near a hill, perform all kinds of tricks: they toss to the right and to the left, start back, rear on their hind legs; but there is one thing they will not do, and that is,– they do not wish to put their necks into the collar and pull up-hill.

There is but one thing which they do not do, the one necessary thing, – they do not wish to fulfil the teaching, in spite of the tension of the work. And so it is impossible to make sufficient efforts and sacrifices, in order from Christian conversations and sentiments to pass to acts, from balking at the foot of the hill to walking in even step up-hill.

To pass from talking to acting, we may sacrifice anything but what we are pulling by, the traces, that is, the good-will to men, the love union with men.

8

The other day a young lady called on me, and she asked me how she might live well.

So I said to her, " Live as you deem good. For, if I tell you, you will live according to my conscience, and this is inconvenient. Every person must live by his own conscience, and not higher than his conscience, but a little lower. The best is to live in such a way as to fall a little below the conscience, so that one may be able to catch up with the conscience, when it gets too far ahead. This is best, for then a man is always dissatisfied with himself, does not always fully answer the demands of his conscience, repents, goes ahead, ' lives.'

" It is bad to live too far below one's conscience, – it is hard to catch up with it, for what may happen to a man is what happened to Peter before the threefold crowing of the cock.

" Worst of all is renunciation, when a man has caught up with his conscience and stops, for rest is death."

9

It is impossible from Spencer to deduce Christianity, that is, truth.

Truth is from God, through Christ, and there is no other path for it.

If we were to deduce anything from Spencer, we should get what we did get: there will be found the alphabet of Christianity, and not of Christianity alone, but the alphabet of all religions, – the love of God and of our neighbour, which was given long ago, and has always been known to all men.

And it seems to us that we know everything; and we even feel angry because Christ knew more and demanded of us more; and we reject, or try to reject, what he said and gave us.

And even if we do not reject, we weaken in our hope of discovering laws, – better laws, – because they will satisfy our evil propensities.

10

So long as the inertia of lying and of the consciousness of truth act at an angle which is less than two right angles, life proceeds along the resultant.

But when the two forces will take up positions opposite one another, along the same line, life will stop, either of its own will, or by the will of another.

11

I think that the cause of the burden and the struggle is mainly due to this, that we have not freed ourselves from care for reputation among men, for the opinion of men about us.

Try to solve your doubts about how to act, independently of people's opinion, by imagining that no one will ever find out how you acted; or that, having acted in one way or another, you will at once die; or, what is easier than anything else, by putting yourself purposely before men in the meanest, lowest light, – so that, no matter how you may act, you could not fall any lower: " I am a Ear, and a pig, and a boaster; I say one thing and do another; I am cruel and a cheat." Do this, if you have the strength, in reality; and if you have not the strength, at least in imagination.

Nothing so confuses us in our determinations and so weakens us in our acts, and provokes such a painful consciousness of struggle as the mixing up of two motives, – of an activity for God and an

activity for people's opinion.

You do not know where one thing begins and the other ends. You do not know what really to believe in, whether you believe indeed, or only want people to think that you behave.

At times it happens that you think that you behave in what you really do not believe in; and at times, again, you think that you do not believe in what you really believe. And so my one advice is: try with all your force to remove the care as to people's opinion, in order that you may find out what you believe in.

The best and most convenient means for this is selfhumiliation.

And then you can live in conformity with what you believe.

12

Your question as to how and when it is best to use one's forces would be a very difficult one, if it were necessary to give one faultless solution for it; but there can be as many solutions as there are propositions, and all can be, and certainly will be, faulty, like everything which men do.

Yes, tear one fetter and tighten another, and so on until the grave, and die doing this.

And I will tell you what I think in full: such is life, beautiful life, which is given to us alone.

Even so have lived all the best men, and thus lived Christ, and thus he ordered us to live.

Life is beautiful in that, in the first place, when you tear one fetter, which binds you most and is most strong, you tighten another, which is less binding and strong, and so march ahead toward liberation, – and in this there is joy–

But not in this alone is the whole matter, and it is not good and not right to look back at this. The main thing is, that, at the same time with the tearing of the fetters and the slow retardation of motion, you feel that by this very thing, with the aid of your own mind, you are doing another work, the work of establishing the kingdom of God upon earth. And I wish for nothing better, and do not wish to think of anything better, than such a life.

Now I shall answer your other questions.

If I were in your place, I should go to M----, not that

I should arrange anything there, but I should work with him; perhaps something would come of it: another may come, – and then again, maybe nothing would come of it, but that does not interest me. I speak this from a personal feeling. This would be the most agreeable

thing for me. But how is it for you ?

In my opinion we must, of two good, or at least not bad, things, always do the one which is the most agreeable, because we shall do this better, and, besides, a greater pleasure is partly a symptom of a predetermination by God.

The other question is as to what I should desire for my sake that you should do.

I should desire for my sake that you should go to the Caucasus to help the Milkens. In my opinion, you are able to help and strengthen them, and enlighten them, – and this is what I want.

But because I want this, it has no weight whatsoever.

The third answer is, that we must undertake as little

\* as possible, but should comply with those demands which are made right here, at the present time.

The fourth and, in my opinion, the most correct answer, though it may seem general and indefinite, is, that we must serve God, not on this or that mount, but in the spirit and in truth.

According to the meaning of this answer, the whole significance is in the internal activity, with which every external selection becomes indifferent, and a man inclines toward this, a second, or a tenth act, that is, toward such as he has not even foreseen, or chosen, but does it imperceptibly, naturally.

February, 1893.

V.

## RELATION TO TRUTH

1

Christ's teaching does not prescribe any acts, – it shows the truth.

But the question as to how to act in a given case is by every man decided in his soul, according to the lucidity and strength of his consciousness of truth. It is determined not that I want to act according to Christ's teach-in", or not, but that I cannot act otherwise.

2

If only those whose idle life is supported by other people's life of labour understood that their only justification may be found in their being able to use their leisure for bethinking themselves, – for the work of reason !

But they carefully fill their leisure with vanity, so that they have even less time left for thinking than the labourer who is overcome by his work.

3

« To do the will of Him that sent me is my meat.»

What a deep and what a simple meaning!

A man may be calm and always satisfied, only when the aim of his life is not something external, but the fulfilment of the will of Him who sent him.

And again, this clear expression, “ This is my meat.”

The majority of men do for themselves only what is necessary for the body, – they make their food, and they forget everything which is for other men.

It is of this whole sphere of activity, which men do not do for themselves, but for the opinion of men, that Christ says that we should work in it, doing the will of Him who sent us, – not for men's sake. And of this activity he says that it is for him like food, just as indispensable and just as independent of human opinion.

To do the will of Him who sent us, like eating and drinking, is not for men, but for our satisfaction.

It is this that is needed, and this is possible, and this is the only path of life, which always and everywhere gives the good.

4

I have just read mediaeval and modern history in a brief text-book.

Is there in the world more terrible reading ?

Is there a book which could be more harmful for young people's reading ? And yet it is this that is being taught.

I read it through, and for a long time could not get out of my feeling of dejection: murders, tortures, deceptions, plunderings, fornication, – and nothing more.

They say that it is necessary for a man to know whence he came.

But has every one of us come from there ?

That from which I and every one of us with our worldconception have come does not exist in this history, and there is no reason for teaching me this.

dust as I bear all the physical features of my ancestors, so do I bear in myself all the labour of thought, the whole real history, – of all my ancestors.

I and every one of us have always known this. It is all implanted in us through the telegraph, newspapers, conversations, sight of cities and villages.

To bring this knowledge to consciousness ? Yes ? But for this we need the history of thought, which is entirely independent of that history. That history is only a gross reflection of the real history.

The reformation is a rude, incidental reflection of the labour of thought striving after the liberation of man from darkness. Luther, with all the wars and sights of St. Bartholomew, has no place by the side of Erasmus, Rousseau, and others.

5

We must as frequently as possible remind ourselves that our real life is not that external, material life, which takes place here upon earth, in our sight, but the inner life of our spirit, for which the visible life is only a scaffolding necessary for the rearing of the building of our spiritual growth. This scaffolding has in itself but a temporary purpose, after the fulfilment of which it is not good for anything and even becomes an obstacle.

Seeing before himself the immense, towering, and firmly clasped timbers, while the building barely rises above the foundation, a man is inclined to make the mistake of ascribing a greater significance to the scaffolding than to the building which is going up and for the sake of which this temporary scaffolding has been put up.

We must remind ourselves and one another that the only meaning and significance of the scaffolding is the possibility of rearing the building itself.

6

The material form in which the awakening of our consciousness of the true life finds us in this world represents, as it were, the border which limits the free development of our spirit.

Matter is the limit of the spirit; but the true life is the destruction of this limit.

In this comprehension is contained the essence of the comprehension of truth itself, that essence which gives to man the consciousness of the eternal life.

Materialists take the limit for the true life.

7

Every one of us, having come to know the truth, finds himself in a certain position, bound by worldly ties, or even by the nooses of dead joys, of former connections with men. And a man who has come to know the truth first of all imagines that the chief thing which he ought to do consists in getting at once, at all cost, out of those conditions in which he found himself, and in putting himself under such conditions as to make it clear to people that he is living according to Christ's law; and then only must he live in these conditions, showing people an example of a true Christian life.

But this is not so.

The demand of reason does not consist in finding himself in this or that state, but in living without violating the love of God and of one's neighbours.

A Christian will always strive after a life that is free from sin, will always choose such a life, if, to attain it, he shall not be asked to do things which impair this love. But the trouble is, that a man is never so little connected with his own past sins and those of others that he is able, without violating the love of God and of his neighbours, at once to enter into such an external state.

Every Christian, amidst worldly people, finds himself in such conditions that, in order to approach the desired state, he must first loosen the fetters of his former sins, those fetters by which he is tied to people; and so the first and chief problem consists in opening these fetters in accordance with the love of God and of one's neighbours, and not to tighten them, and so cause pain to him with whom one is bound up.

A Christian's work is not in some certain state, but in the fulfilment of God's will. But fulfilling God's will consists in answering all the demands of life in the way in which this is demanded by the love of God and of men; and so it is impossible to determine the nearness or remoteness of oneself and of others from Christ's ideal, by judging from the state a man is in, or from those acts which he is committing.

A Christian's turning away from the worldly life will always be one and the same; it cannot change, and so the acts of a Christian will always incline toward getting away from evil vanity, from luxury, from the cruelty of a worldly life, and in coming to the lowest state, which is most despised in a worldly sense.

But the state in which a Christian will find himself will depend on the conditions in which he was overtaken by the recognition of the truth and on the degree of his sensitiveness to the sufferings of others.

His acts may take him to the gallows, to the prison, to a night-lodging house, – but they may take him also into a palace and to a ball.

What is important is not the state a man is in, but the acts which have brought him to this state; and God alone can be the judge of these acts.

You will say, " Therefore a man, in professing the Christian teaching, may, under the pretext of not wishing to offend his near friends, continue to live a sinful life, justifying himself by his professed love of God and of his neighbours."

" Yes, he may."

He may as much as a man, who has prepared for himself a sinless state (or such as seems to him to be such), the state of the agriculturist, may live in it, only in order to boast of this state before other men. In either case the judgment is impossible.

In either case the peril is the same.

In the first the peril consists in this, that, continuing to live, for the sake of the love of men, in the worldly conditions of life, a man is tempted by these worldly conditions of life and uses them, not because he cannot help using them, but because of his weakness, – I have frequently experienced this myself.

For the second the peril is this, that, having at once placed himself under those conditions of life which are considered righteous, a man lives in these conditions, without trying to walk on toward the perfection of love, and priding himself on his state, hates and despises all those who are not in the same state with him, – I have experienced this, too, only not so often.

The path is narrow in both cases, and only he who walks on it and God know whether he is on that path. It is impossible for one to judge of another, both on account of the difference of their positions, and still more on account of the difference in the degree of the spiritual sensitiveness.

One man, by forsaking his wife, or mother, or father, by offending and angering them, almost commits no bad v 0 0 0 9

act by it, because he does not feel the pain he is causing; another, who has done the same act, has committed a mean act, because he fully appreciates the pain which he is causing.

We can judge of the wealth, the beauty, the strength of men, but of

the degree of their morality we are, not exactly prohibited, but unable to judge. And this is a great good. If we were able to judge, we could not love certain people, and since we cannot judge, we have no obstacle against loving all.

All we know is what is said in the sixth chapter of Matthew:

" The condition in which people praise a man is not more advantageous for him than that in which they curse him."

In the first case under our observation the desire for human praise may be mixed in with the work of God; in the second, if anything is done for God, it is done only for Him.

A man is walking off the road; he walks across fields and is suffering, and finally finds the road; he walks on it himself, and shows it also to other men. Is it possible that the men who have been put on the road, upon noticing that the man who indicated the road to them is again walking across fields, are able to imagine that the man who has shown them the road has had some misgivings as to preferring the road to trackless fields ? Is it possible they themselves can have any misgivings as to this, that it is better to walk along the road, when they see that he who has led them out on the road is not walking on it ?

Is it possible that those who have been brought out on the road will not go ? And what of it, if he who brought them out is still walking across the fields ? There must be some invisible cause for it, – a ravine or a brook.

8

Last night the plashing of the water in the basin awoke me. I called my wife, thinking that she was washing herself. She was asleep: it was a mouse that had fallen into the basin and was struggling to get out.

We have had conflicts before on account of mice, and these conflicts have caused me to reflect. It would happen that a mouse would get into a mouse-trap, which somebody else had set.

I take it, to carry it out, and to let the mouse out in the yard.

My wife says, "You had better not touch it: I will take it out myself and will have it killed."

I leave it to her, knowing that the mouse will be killed.

But to-day, as I was lying and wanting to go to sleep, I heard this tiny creature struggle as it was drowning, and I understood that it was not right, and that I had done wrong, when I had permitted the mice to be killed, when I had had the chance to save them. I saw that I did not do it in order not to violate love, but in order to avoid a small unpleasantness.

This is bad in our situation: we permit not mice, but men to perish, doing other people a pleasure, only to avoid a small unpleasantness.

It is this that we should remember and not forget for a minute.

9

The rule, " Always tell the truth," cannot be put on a par with the other commandments of Christ.

This rule, as a rule, stands very much lower and, as a rule, cannot even be expressed. But as an absolute condition of serving God it is no longer a rule, but the very essence of the teaching, and stands even higher than the five commandments. " I am the life, the way, and the truth."

And so a Christian cannot depart from the truth. The truth is the *conditio sine qua non* of his life. And so, when we speak of truthfulness, as of a practical rule, there results a misunderstanding from it.

It is the same as though we should say, " You must always breathe." The moment this is said, instead of the confirmation that you cannot live without breathing, there may at once arise the questions, " but how when I am choking or when I am listening intently, – must I breathe then, or not ?"

Truth, truthfulness, is the teaching itself, and so, he who lives by the teaching will strive toward the truth and will be afraid of every departure from it. But this rule cannot compel him to be truthful.

10

Diseases and sins, – these are the same as motion and heat: one passes into the other.

Diseases are for the most part consequences of sin, and to free ourselves from them, we must free ourselves from sin, – error. Living in error, we must know that we live in disease, which, if it has not yet appeared, will inevitably make its appearance.

What is also important is this, that every man, in subjecting himself to diseases, bears the responsibility for the errors of others, – for his ancestors and his contemporaries ; and that everybody who lives in error introduces disease and suffering among others, – his contemporaries and his descendants. But every one who lives without disease is under obligation for it to others, and every one, in freeing himself from error, cures not himself alone (one cannot cure oneself alone) but also his descendants and contemporaries.

11

I wish to say something about the meaning of science, which destroys superstition, false concepts, – namely, about the meaning of this activity of science.

Science destroys false concepts, – that is true, but it is not possible on its path to get along without false concepts, without superstition. There will be no vault of heaven, there will be no devil, there will be no personal God; but, instead, there will be the imponderable, but elastic ether ; there will be the forces of spiritism and many things more.

A man who recognizes the heavens to be a firm vault, who recognizes the devil and the miracles of the saints, and a man who recognizes the atoms and spiritism, in no way differ in their receptiveness, in their adaptability for the recognition of truth and for a moral activity. They differ, so to speak, according to their mental age. One is a grown man ; the other is a child or youth. But as a youth may be beautiful, so also may a man; and it is as incorrect to assert that young people are better than the old as to assert that science (a greater degree of knowledge) makes men better, as also that it contributes to their deterioration. Science (a greater degree of knowledge) is inevitable, like age. It cannot be defended, nor attacked. No matter what you may do, it will come, like age.

There exists in man the ability of an inner effort toward the good, toward truth, which the believer calls grace. There exists the possibility of this effort, and this effort may be directed toward goodness and truth, but it cannot be directed toward science.

The scientific acquisitions take place, like everything else, including the striving after truth and goodness, according to the laws of necessity. And the great mistake of the direction of this small circle of men, called the intellectuals, is this, that, busying themselves with science, they imagine that they are doing exactly what is demanded of a man who is able at will to make efforts for the attainment of goodness and truth.

The occupations with the sciences are special occupations, which fill a man's leisure and which serve for the advantage of other men, – just such occupations as the making of tarts, or of lamps, or of anything you please. But our unfortunate youth ascribes to these occupations the meaning of a moral activity. This is where the trouble is.

The occupations themselves do not lighten the moral activity one hair's breadth. Amidst peasants who are sectarians there are many sensitive moral personalities, and their ignorance of science does not hurt them. And there are among the masses many personalities who are not sensitive, who are coarse, – and they will not go beyond Iberian relics, and so forth.

The same is true of the intellectual classes: some are not kept by the highest knowledge from seeing wherein lies man's true activity,

while others (no matter how you may expand for them the sphere of knowledge) will stick fast in atoms and forces, as in the Iberian image and in the relics, and they think that in them is everything, and that there is nothing else to do but to know how to place a taper before the Virgin of the Iberian chapel and how to study matter.

But if the question is put like this, " Need men know what they know now ? " the answer will be, " Of course, they need to know it, just as one has to be grown and cannot remain a child."

But it is impossible to preach science, which is precisely what is attempted among us, just as it is impossible to preach that a man should have a beard growing before the time for it has come.

VI.

## LIFE AND METAPHYSICS

1

In proportion as we begin to understand the vital, that is the true, teaching of Christ, the metaphysical questions recede farther and farther from us, and when the vital significance becomes absolutely clear, the possibility of any interest in them is completely removed, and so also the possibility of any disagreement in metaphysical questions.

There are so many direct, imperative, ever-present, and vastly important affairs for a disciple of Christ, that he has no time to busy himself with metaphysics.

As a good workman certainly does not know all the details of his master's life, while the lazy workman dillydallies in the kitchen and finds out all about it, – how many children the master has, and what he eats, and how he dresses, – and in the end none the less gets all mixed up and finds out nothing of importance, but only misses his work, – even such is the difference between metaphysicians and Christ's true disciples.

What is important is to recognize God as a master and to know what He demands of me, but what He Himself is and how He lives, I shall never find out, because I am not a match for Him.

I am a labourer, and He is the master.

Who will deny that it is God who is doing everything good in me ?

But the question whether He is external is dangerous.

I cannot say anything about it.

He is everything; I am not everything, hence He is in me. But I know Him only because there is in me something divine.

But this is a dangerous and, I am afraid, blasphemous metaphysics.

3

Lately a thought which braces me up has become clear to me.

The moral law, Christ's law, his five commandments, – this is the eternal law which will not pass, because it will be fulfilled.

It is as indispensable, inevitable a law as the law of gravity, the laws of chemical combinations, and other physical laws.

It must be assumed that those physical laws have wavered just as much, have not been common to all the phenomena, have been worked out; but all these laws have not changed so long as everything has not changed, and finally they became a necessity.

The same is true of the moral law: it is worked out by us.

We toss hither and thither, and after billions of false paths find the one true path, and this path is established.

And so we know through reason that this must be so, and we feel this with our whole being.

The time will come that this will be so, and this will be just as firm as all the other laws of Nature. Then there will be worked out new laws.

I am very much pleased with this thought, – it gives me great force and firmness.

There is one means for doing something, and that is, to prepare the tools of work, to introduce order into it: feed the horse, harness it nicely, don't jerk it, but drive smoothly, and then it will take you a long distance.

The same is true of one's work:

(1) To feed, that is, to feed on faith, – religion, the thought of the common life and personal death.

(2) To find an application for one's activity.

(3) Not to be restive, not to be in haste, and not to stop.

This much in regard to the question of activity.

And not to do a thing there is one means, – elsewhere to let out the water which tears down the dam.

In life this water is strong desire, – and then work at the agreeable, incessant work.

5

If an ear skips the machine, it is an ear.

When it gets into the machine, it is a grain, then flour, then bread, then blood, then nerves, then thought, and as soon as it is thought, it is all, that is, no longer an ear, but that from which is rye, and bread, and the swine, and the tree, and everything, that is, God.

It gets into the brain, and from there it may find its way into God, into the source of everything.

In man, in his life, in the brain, in reason, is the source of everything. Not the source, but the part which unites, which blends with the beginning of all.

Every vital phenomenon, every impression, which a man receives may pass through man as through a conductor, and may reach his pith and there unite with its beginning.

Man's problem and fortune is to form of himself an endless, free, primary centre, and not a secondary, organic enslaved conductor.

This is not clear for others, but it is for me.

6

It is possible correctly to solve an equation with one unknown, only when by  $x$  we actually mean one absolutely unknown quantity, which is to be determined in the solution of the equation.

If a man, in solving this equation, should arbitrarily determine the quantity of the real number, he naturally would not be able after that freely and correctly to solve the equation, but would bend all his operations on the figures and all his considerations to one end, – to prove that  $x$  precisely equals the quantity which he has determined in advance.

The same is true with the questions of life. It is possible correctly to solve every vital question that arises, only in case a

man really is conscientious in recognizing this question as open to him, and is sincerely prepared to receive any solution to which he may be brought by the free, unbiassed indications of his conscience and reason.

And yet, as frequently in such cases, a man, sometimes even without noticing it himself, has in advance determined in what sense the question has to be solved, and then only picks out in himself such motives and considerations as would exactly bring him to the predetermined solution of the question.

Such solutions of the equations with predetermined x's are met with at every step.

VII.

DOUBT

1

How can one ask, " Can I ? Can I serve men ? Can I live ?"

This is the one thing winch each of us can do.

If love and the desire to serve men moves man, he can do everything, – he can give his life for others, – that is, he can reach the limits of infinite ministrations.

But the question as to whether I can give this or that signifies only, " In so far as I err, doing this or that."

Now the error is due to this, that in place of the legitimate mover of life there has come to stand some kind of an abomination; that here and there the lie has roiled my love.

Who can, outside of myself, find out how much dirt, lie, and real force there is in my moving force ?

I alone know this of myself, and everybody knows this only of himself.

If there is any doubt, there is dirt.

And if there is dirt, it has to be thrown out. And to the extent to which the dirt has been thrown out, every one of us is powerful to do everything in the service of men.

June, 1887.

2

We all know what we need, and we know where to look for explanations, if there is something we do not know.

In your questions the answers are included. " You will learn from me, because I am meek and humble, everything is good and easy for me."

We believe that for an humble and meek man everything is easy and good.

We believe it, but we begin to live, and we feel that our yoke is not good or our burden light.

What does this mean ?

One or the other: either it is not true that for the humble and meek man everything is good and everything light, or else we are not sufficiently meek and humble. Not that we do not wish to be such, but because behind us hangs the ballast of past years and the habit of error.

It is this that I answer in reply to the question: " Should we suffer and keep quiet, or suffer and seek a remedy ? "

Suffer, if you have not learned to rejoice, and learn to rejoice.

This, in my opinion, answers all three questions.

November, 1887.

3

There cannot help but be an agreement with truth and its recognition, – it is in all men, even in those who call it names and go counter to it.

That we have all been and shall be in agreement, there is, thank God, no longer a moment of doubt, – what gives pleasure is when men stop struggling in vain against truth, and find happiness in it.

4

There are moments when a man stops believing in the life of the spirit.

This is not unbelief, but periods of belief in the life of the flesh.

Suddenly a man begins to fear death.

This always happens when he is distracted by something, and he again begins to believe in this, that the carnal life is the life, just as in the theatre one can forget oneself and come to believe that what

one sees on the stage is taking place in reality, and become frightened at what one sees on the stage.

The same happens in life.

Only after a man has come to understand that his life is not on the stage, but in the pit, that is, not in the personality, but outside it, it sometimes happens that, from old habit, he again falls into the temptation of the illusion, and he feels ill at ease.

But these minutes of the illusion cannot, however, convince me that what is taking place in front of me (with my carnal life) is taking place in reality.

During such periods of dejection of spirit one must treat oneself as a sick man, – one must not stir.

5

The seed recognizes its integument as its real ego, and is worried and weeps, because it will perish.

But it grew out of a seed, fell out of an ear, and again, perishing and throwing up its integument, produces an ear, which is full of seeds.

" The seed shall not come to life unless it perish."

VIII.

## DISSATISFACTION

1

Dissatisfaction is a sign of people who are walking on the road and not standing still, as we should like to.

A joyous sensation!

September, 1886.

2

A bad ploughman (who is unreliable for the kingdom of God) is he who looks back, and, we may add, he who looks forward, and not at his

furrow.

To think what I could do, if it were so and so, and I were there or there, or how much I have done, weakens me for life as much as to think in advance of what I can do, and of how important will be what I shall do.

It is necessary to throw out of our heads the comparison of our present life with any preceding, or with the subsequent life, for the simple reason that there is no subsequent and no preceding life, but only a concept of it; there is only the present life, and it alone is important and sacred.

To ask for a higher essence with fancies, and to subject this essence to fancies is a great mistake (sin).

October, 1886.

3

Dissatisfaction with oneself, the consciousness of the incompatibility of life with the demands of the heart, I know in my own case, and I ask you for this one thing, do not speak of it, do not think of it, do not mention it even to yourself.

It is the same as though a pilgrim who is going to Jerusalem should be constantly thinking of how much he has marched already, and of how much walking there is ahead of him.

These thoughts can only weaken his energy.

We must think of the nearest stop, if we must think of the future at all.

Of course, this has reference only to those who go the right way.

Even if it should happen that one of them should lose his way and find himself again in the old place, from which he had started, this ought by no means to discourage him. He will know the road better, and will still continue to walk.

The Chinese wisdom says, "Renovate thyself every day from the beginning, and again from the beginning."

I like this very much, and I try to do so, and for me it is sufficient to know that, by looking back, I see that I am advancing, and not retreating. This knowledge is sufficient for me, to make me live cheerfully, with the assurance that I am on the right road.

How much do I walk in a day? This is another question. I try to walk as much as possible, but it frequently happens that I walk less and lose time, rest, – I rest often, – and stand, when I might walk.

Don't feel bad about the lethargy, – it has to be, like sleep.

There must be, it seems to me, dissatisfaction with oneself, and not with others, and I frequently console myself with the thought that I am not yet entirely lost, because I am constantly dissatisfied with myself. But I know what I am dissatisfied with, – with my definite abominations, in the liberation from which nobody can help me, and the work over which forms my whole life. But I do not worry about the circle in which I live, about the external conditions of my life, because I know through experience that this or that circle, these or those conditions of life result from my greater or lesser nearness to Christ and truth.

I live as I live, not because the enlightenment found me in grievous, oppressive conditions (as I used to think), but because I am bad. In proportion as I am and shall be better, the circle and the external conditions will be better. If I were a saint, the circle and the external conditions would be ideal, I should be living as I present to myself the lives of Christ's disciples, that is, as a mendicant, a vagrant, a servant of all men, and I do not despair even now, because this is none the less in my power.

It is just as impossible to stand better, nearer to the truth in consequence of external conditions, as it is to sit astride a stick, take hold of it with both hands, and raise oneself.

The external conditions of life, the forms of life, union, all these are consequences of the internal perfection, approach to Christ.

Seek the kingdom of God, which is within you, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

4

Most stupid dejection! I feel bad because the seeds sown, not mine, but God's, are hidden in the ground and grow up in it, and do not come to the surface, as I, in my stupidity, wish that it should be, so that I may see that the seeds are intact.

5

It seems to me that a man must make it his first rule to be happy and satisfied; he must be ashamed, as of a bad act, of his dissatisfaction, and should know that if anything is not going right with a person, he has no time to talk about it, but must at once mend what presses or is not going right.

How are that form and those conditions to be found which are best ?

If all the greatest sages of the world were called together, they, too, would be unable to find those forms even for one best known man.

There is one thing which I have noticed, namely this, that the longer a man lives, the more he complies with the demands made on

him, the less he is interested in the arrangement of life, and the more disgusting is the arrangement itself.

6

All people are assailed by bad minutes, which for the most part have a physical cause.

Above all, it is necessary to avoid for the condition of general sadness and irritation substituting causes for this sadness and this irritation.

" I feel sad, I am irritated."

" Why ? At what ? "

When a man has reached the point when he sincerely answers himself, " At nothing, for no reason, I simply feel sad and irritated," the sadness and irritation will pass at once.

August, 1886.

IX.

## DISAGREEMENTS

1

Do you know how picture-blocks are put together ?

One will make out the picture from one pair of blocks, another from another pair. Let him just put up the first pair, and he will put together the rest.

I know from experience and am able now to distinguish people who put the blocks together at haphazard from those who have sensibly put together two, and so will certainly find out the picture, - they will find it out, if not to-day, certainly to-morrow, and it will be all the time the same one and eternal picture.

And so I, reading your disagreements with me, am not even agitated, for I know in advance that we have one, inevitable, and eternal picture.

And so I agree with you in everything, not because I purposely want to agree, but because our disagreement is only due to this, that you

bring together the blocks from one side, and I from another. But the blocks are the same.

But with those who have not yet begun to bring the blocks together and who assure us that they see this or that, I disagree in advance. And I feel pained in the company of those who say in advance that nothing will come of it, or can come of it; I feel like being angry with them, and I restrain myself.

The disagreement of people is exceedingly painful, especially so because a man thinks of himself that he has not his own opinion, but only holds to the truth ; and suddenly it turns out that the truth is not only not understood, but that it even offends people, and drives them away from him.

There is something wrong here, I am to blame for something, I have in some way offended truth.

This is terrible, and it torments me.

3

If there is a disagreement in words, we must, not add words, but avoid them, that is, avoid that from which the disagreement originates, and help one another as best we can.

We are all not only not pure Christians, but full of sin, and so we frequently do and say what we ought not. But at the same time we all wish, and cannot help wishing, and speak, and do what is necessary, because in this alone does our life consist.

If we fail, it is from weakness and former errors, and so we have nothing to prove to one another, but must only help one another.

This I ask of others, and this I wish others.

May, 1888.

4

He and they think that it is very wise to say, " I do not know this, this cannot be proved, I do not want this."

It is assumed that to say tins is a sign of intellect and culture, whereas it is a sign of ignorance.

I do not know any planets, nor axes, around which the earth turns, nor any incomprehensible ecliptics; I do not want to take all this on trust, - I see the sun is moving, and the stars are somehow moving.

Indeed, it is very hard to prove the turning of the earth, and the path of the celestial luminaries, and the equinox, and many things in this sphere still remain obscure and, above all,

incomprehensible. The advantage is this, that everything has here been reduced to unity.

The same is true in the moral and spiritual sphere. The question, "What to do?" has to be reduced to unity.

What shall we know? What hope for?

All humanity struggles to reduce these questions to unity.

And suddenly it appears to people that there is some merit in disuniting what has already been reduced to unity, and they pride themselves on this their activity.

They have carefully been taught ceremonies and religion, though it was known in advance that this will not lead to anything and would not stand the proof of their mental maturity. They have been taught a mass of sciences, which are in no way connected, and they all remain without unity, with disunited sciences, and they think that this is an acquisition.

5

Some are affected only by complete sincerity, and sincerity is attained only when a man lays open his soul and is guided in his display by his own motives only.

6

Jesus said at the end of his sermon (Matt. vii. 24-27):

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

What were the words which he said, that if a man shall hear and do according to his words, he will thus build a house on the rock; and a man who hears and does not do so, will build a house on the sand, and the house will perish?

"What are the words, of which he said, as he began to say them (Matt. v. 19)," Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

What are these words, and what are these commandments ?

Everything a man needs to know and everything he needs to do is said in these words. And we, the Christians, say that we believe in him who has said these words, and that we believe in his words.

But why do we not hear his words and do according to his words ?

In these words it says, " Every man who is angry with another man is guilty, and if he calls another man names, he is still more guilty."

Thus it says in Jesus' sermon, but let us look around at Christian people, and on all sides, in the city, in the country, we shall see that people do not stop being angry with one another; on all sides do we hear scolding and cursing. Not only strangers, but even relatives, scold and curse one another. Brother quarrels with brother, father with son, husband with wife. They scold and curse one another and invent the most stinging epithets, and boast of their scolding, as though they did not understand, or could not do, what Jesus said.

It is impossible not to understand him. It says simply and clearly, " Do not call each other names."

And there is no cunning and no difficulty in what Jesus said.

If there were anything cunning, well, we might find some excuse; but what can there be easier than not to call names ?

We certainly do not call the authorities any names.

Not a single peasant ever scolds the rural judge to his face. Why does he scold his brother, son, wife ?

Because he does not dare to scold the rural judge,— he is afraid of him.

How does he dare to scold his wife, son, brother ? God has forbidden this.

Consequently he is less afraid of God than of the rural judge, or he does not believe in God.

It is said that a man cannot bring a gift before God if he is at war with his brother. It says that, before going into the temple, he must make his peace with his brother.

So it says, and all the churches are full of people, all pray to God, and is there among them one among a thousand who does not have at least ten, hundreds of brothers, with whom he has not made his peace ?

They quarrel, hate one another, and make no peace, as though they did not understand what is said.

But it is impossible not to understand, – it says so plainly and so simply, " First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

And about the same thing it says even more clearly, in the same sermon, " But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses " (Matt. vi. 15).

It is impossible not to understand this. If we do not forgive our brother his trespasses, if we are not reconciled with him, God will not receive any prayer.

And what Jesus commands is not difficult.

It is not difficult for us to go to church, to dress ourselves up, place tapers, stand through divine service; it is not difficult every day to tear oneself away from work and kneel. Why, then, is it difficult, before doing so, to go to a brother and ask his forgiveness, and make peace with him ?

Evidently we do not wish to do what God commands us to do.

X.

## PROSELYTISM

1

The conversation of others is effective and complete only when it is the consequence (almost unconsciously) of one's own confirmation and, therefore, improvement.

2

I frequently reproach myself (in bad moments) for not having insisted on my opinion, but I have never been able to insist, not only in fact, but even in words.

The moment I saw that my acts or words caused suffering, I stopped, or, if I did not stop, I regretted them. I could not do otherwise, because my aim, as professed by me, is the good of others. If evil results, I am naturally to blame, and evidently I am doing something wrong.

More than that: I have convinced myself that the words, "No one comes to me except he whom the Father draws," are the most exact definition of reality.

I know this regeneration, this resurrection to the true life, is accomplished is a mystery, which is taking place under our eyes, and it is impossible to comprehend its process.

It is God's mystery, – His relation with every man.

It is not right – it is a sin – to mix up in this affair.

No one is ever able to attract, to convert, another, and the desire to attract, to convert, another man, namely, a certain man or men, is the cause of terrible evils.

It is the sacred business of our life to shine with the light which is in us, before people, before all people.

This is very difficult at first, but later gives greater power and rest.

Not my will shall be done, but His!

I feel like serving these men, and He wants His own, and I cannot interfere with His arrangement.

It is my business to seek His will and to fulfil it.

But His will is the love of all, of all those who are nearest to me, submission to Him, and humility before oneself.

3

I am very glad that in the last three years every vestige of proselytism, which had been very strong, has vanished.

I am so strongly convinced that that which for me is a truth, is a truth for all men, that the question as to when and as to what people will arrive at does not interest me.

Yesterday I ground some coffee, and now and then I watched to see when a particular bean which I had observed would come between the cogs.

Apparently this is an idle and even a dangerous occupation, because, while busying myself with the coffee-bean, I stopped grinding and moved the bean nearer to the mouth.

All will be ground up, if we continue to grind, and we cannot help grinding, because not we, but God carries on this grinding process through us and through the whole spiritual world.

4

We must do what we can under existing conditions, – but we must think and express our thoughts independently of existing conditions.

This frequently confuses me for my own sake and for the sake of others.

How if we do not give the reins to our thought and expression, in view of existing conditions ?

This is, indeed, the most sinful suicide!

We must do things independently of existing conditions.

There are many such very important thoughts of yours, and for this reason we eighteen hundred years after Christ live in such darkness that these existing conditions are taken by men for something which might arrest thought.

What I have sowed will come up, though not in my time.

We must sow, forgetting about the conditions.

We must do the internal and the external work: communicate our thoughts and express them.

The consciousness of the illegality of war and violence, and their incompatibility with Christianity, has so matured everywhere that a coarse advocacy of barbarism is needed, in order to support this deception.

5

I want and I think, I want and I believe, and I will work.

Not I shall see it, but others, – but I will do my work.

An excellent thought that the moral law is similar to the philosophical thought, – only it is *ini Werden*. It is more than *im Werden*, – it is cognized.

Soon it will be wrong to put in prisons, men will not wage war, glut themselves, take away from the hungry, even as now it is not permitted to devour men or trade in them.

What happiness to be a worker in the clearly defined divine work !

If you love God's good, love it, that is, live by it, you also see happiness and life in it. But you also see that the body hampers the true good, not your good, but it keeps you from seeing the good and its fruits.

Let us look at the fruits of the good, – and we shall stop doing the good. More than that: by looking, you spoil the good, you glory, you lose courage.

Only then will what you do be a true good, when you shall not exist, to spoil it.

Prepare more: sow, knowing that not you, the man, will reap.

One sows, another reaps. You, the man, are the sower, – you will not reap.

If you shall not only reap, but also weed, – you will ruin the wheat.

Sow and sow! And if you sow what is God's, there can be no doubt, – it will grow up.

What before appeared cruel, namely, that I am not allowed to see the fruits, – it is now clear to me, – is not only not cruel, but good and sensible.

How could I distinguish the true good, God's good, from what is not true, if I, the carnal man, could make use of its fruits ?

Now it is clear: what you do, without seeing any reward, what you do lovingly, is certainly God's work.

Sow and sow, and God will make it grow and will reap what is His, not what you, the man, sow, but what within you sows.

7

I am sad, because my work is not growing as I wish.

This is the same as being sad because what has been sowed does not come up at once, because the kernel cannot be seen.

It is true, there is no watering.

If there were watering, there would be works that are firm and clear, in the name of the teaching.

They are not so, because God does not wish.

8

In the teaching of the twelve apostles it says, " Arraign some, pray for others, and others again love better than thyself."

In this I see something like a guidance.

At least it so happens with me: at first I arraign, that is, express my views, and so become angry; then, in order not to continue the anger, I stop arraigning, I merely express my views directly, wishing (praying) that they may understand; but those who understand I sincerely love, without any effort, more than my own soul.

Here, it seems to me, is the second, the most important, the most difficult stage, which occurs more frequently than any other.

As soon as the disagreement, the mental distortion, is cleared away, in consequence of which it seems that reason is not obligatory for your interlocutor, – what is to be done ?

In my opinion, we must pray, wish with all our soul, but not speak, not use that means which has already proved inefficient.

We must with all our hearts wish these people good.

What does this mean ?

It means, to love them, love them in deed.

September, 1887.

9

We can and should know the truth and on its basis measure all human affairs, if, as always happens, the subject of the writing has reference to human affairs. In the direct communion with men, in judging small, private acts which always are the result of more complex conditions of life, which are connected with the private life, it is an entirely different matter.

I am something different in those moments, the best moments of my life, when I, alone with God, strive with all the power of my soul to understand Him, when I have rejected in so far as I was able everything personal and live by my divine part alone.

I, when I write, and when I am in communion with men, submit to their effect upon me, when in me arise all the mean qualities of my personality, when I have no time to give an account to myself of who I am and of why I speak or do what I speak or do.

These are two beings which do not at all resemble each other as to their worth, – one stands on the highest rung of the ladder of the perfection which is accessible to me, the other – on the lowest.

I am not the least sorry because people are angry at me and scold me, for expressing the truth; but in my personal intercourse I feel that in the majority of cases I am myself bad, myself a contemptible vessel, which soils its contents.

When we write, we try to conceal ourselves, not because such a method is accepted, but because we know that what is sacred and true is not we, as a personality, but what this personality comprehends.

When we are read (if we are able to conceal ourselves), it is not we, but the truth, that is loved or hated, and it is not our fault.

But in our intercourse the personality of the interlocutor at once makes its appearance, and, no matter how careful we may be, he infects you ; your personality comes to the surface and loses the possibility of correct judgment, correct valuation, and what generally happens is this, that I, loving, want to transmit to another what I theoretically and practically know as the truth, which gives the good; the truth, which is so indubitable that sages and children even cannot help but agree in it, – and suddenly it

turns out that my interlocutor is angry, has not only failed to understand me, but during the conversation with me has, in my very sight, thought out a still more insipid sophism (which conceals the good from us) than the one he had before, and goes away from me with this new insipidity, and with anger, directed not only against me, but also against the direction in which I wished to lead.

How can one remain indifferent to such a strange phenomenon ?

In the Gospel it says, " Cast not a pearl - "

But this is cruel, and how understand, and how dare determine, who are the swine ?

September, 1887.

10

When you see that a man whom you love is sinning, you cannot help but wish that he should repent; but I must remember with this, that under the best circumstances, that is, with the most unconditional sincerity, he can repent only within the limits of his conscience, and not within the limits of mine.

The demands of my conscience from me may be much higher than the demands of his conscience from him, and it would be quite senseless on my part mentally to foist on him the demands of my conscience.

Besides, in these cases it must not be forgotten that, no matter how guilty a man may be, no quarrels with him, nor arraignments, nor admonitions are in themselves able to make him repent, because a man can only repent himself, while another cannot repent him.

11

Formerly I was agitated by quasi-retorts, but now they do not agitate me, nor even interest me in the least.

Let them prove, either on the basis of Christ's teaching, or on the basis of reason, that we must kill, sit in judgment, and punish, that we must believe in the church, and so forth. How can I dispute with them ?

Do you know those mathematical quibbles, by means of which it is proved that a part is greater than the whole, or that two is equal to three ? If I am busy, I cannot in the least be interested in the solution of such a quibble; but I can have no doubt as to a part being less than the whole, or two being equal to two.

Even so it is now.

I see that I have disputed, proved, unravelled sophisms, only because I myself was confused and did not see what is obvious.

Now the solution of quibbles does not interest me. Besides, I see the uselessness of this occupation, since there can be an endless number of such quibbles.

One has no time to attend to them.

XL

## OWNERSHIP

1

Ownership is a fiction, – an imaginary something, which exists only for those who believe in Mammon, and so serve him.

The believer in Christ's teaching is freed from ownership, not by some act, not by the transfer of his property at once or by degrees into other people's hands (in not recognizing the significance of ownership for himself, he cannot recognize it in the case of others), but internally, through the recognition that it does not exist, and cannot exist, but mainly, that it is not indispensable for him or for others.

How will a true Christian act ? He will live, complying in godly fashion with the demands of life, which will present themselves to him, being, naturally, guided by his ties with the past, but in no case will he build his activity on the relations of ownership.

Pupils want to continue studying in an industrial school, or a peasant, who has had his hut burned down, begs for money for another hut.

A Christian has nothing, and can have nothing, but they ask of him, because he is a proprietor.

What is to be done ?

He must fulfil what they ask of him, if this is not contrary to Christ's commandments.

If he is considered to be a proprietor and they ask him for something, he fulfils the prayer.

Thus I think, and thus I decide in my own case, but I do not at all insist that this is a solution for all men.

Of course, it is better to give than to receive and hoard (although even here it is hardly better, if vanity is added), but in general there can be nothing good in the giving of money.

It is something like the game of Old Maids.

2

I am still unable to explain to myself what it is.

Ownership, as it now is, is an evil.

Ownership in itself, as a joy at what I did and how and wherewith I did it, is a good.

And it became clear to me.

There was no spoon, but there was a billet of wood. I reasoned it out, took the trouble, and cut out a spoon. What doubt is there that it is mine, like the nest of this bird, – its nest, which it uses when and how it pleases ?

But ownership which is protected by violence (by a policeman with a revolver) is an evil.

Make a spoon and eat with it, and that, too, so long as another person does not need it, – that is clear.

The question is difficult, because I have made a crutch for my lame fellow, and the drunkard takes it to break the door with it.

The drunkard has to be asked to give up the crutch, and it is unquestionable that, the more men there are, who will ask, the more certainly will the crutch remain with him who needs it.

3

We can count as little on any kind of work, which may support us in a certain manner, as on the right of

the ownership of land or of capital, and even less, because he who counts on the right of ownership counts directly on violence and does not neglect it, while he who counts on constant work seems to deny violence.

But we are all so spoiled and weak that for every one of us there is a minimum of comforts of life, below which we cannot descend without suffering, and by which our ability to be useful is impaired, and yet it is impossible to make work secure.

Here enters the tragical element.

If I have not one hundred thousand in the bank, I shall not be angry, but if I have no work which provides me with the minimum, I shall consider all guilty.

A Christian cannot get away from living for Christ's sake.

There is but one legitimate life, – to receive alms, for Christ's sake, from him who gives, whoever it may be, and to give his labour to anybody, without casting his accounts, but only feeling his guilt, constantly wishing to give more than he takes, assuming life

to consist in this, – this is the only legitimate form of life.

April, 1888.

4

Ownership with the right to defend it and with the duty of the government to secure and recognize it, is not only not a Christian, but an anti-Christian, invention.

For a Christian one thing is important, – not to live in such a way as to be served, but to serve others.

This rule, if it be recognized in its simplest sense, must be referred to the simplest and clearest and most obvious things and must be understood in this sense, that not others are to serve me at the table, but I am to serve others; the horse is not to be harnessed for me, but I am to harness it for others; clothes and boots are not to be made for me, nor soup, coffee to be prepared for me, wood chopped, stoves heated for me, but I am to do all this for others.

From the fact that a man cannot do everything himself and that there is a division of labour, it does not follow at all that I must do nothing, except mental labour, which is expressed in my physical idleness and the work with tongue and pen alone.

Such a division of labour, in which some people have to do work above their strength, all without exception, old men and children, stupid and talented people, while also without exception, every one of them, stupid and clever people, must busy themselves with playing the piano, or delivering lectures, or reading books, or sermons, – such a division of labour cannot be and has never been; it is slavery, the oppression of one class of people by another, that is, a most anti-Christian business.

And so the most spiritual-mental work for a Christian consists in not cooperating in this; in depriving himself of the possibility of exploiting the work of others, and in consciously placing himself in the position of those who serve others.

At one time I wrote about Peter the First, and I had a good explanation of Peter's character and all his rascalities in his having constantly been very busy, – he built boats, and turned wood, and travelled, wrote decrees, and so forth.

Idleness is the mother of all vices, – this is a truism, but that a feverish, hurried activity is a constant concomitant of dissatisfaction with oneself and, above all, with all people, – this all people do not know.

5

Every man can sin, and everybody is sinful, but the trouble is, when

a man judges, he is pulling the wool over his own eyes.

" If the light which is in you be darkness, what is the darkness ?"

" Ae cannot serve God and mammon."

The question as to the relations to men has long ago been decided, not only in the abstract, but also in the practical sense.

" Woe unto the rich. A rich man cannot pass into the kingdom of God. Give to him who asks. Sell your possessions and distribute them," and so forth.

A Christian cannot distribute any property, and so he must have no surplus, and there is no question as to how to divide the surplus. If there is a surplus, I must, before being able to judge of the deserts of him with whom I am to divide, judge myself, and judge myself severely, for having a surplus, and recognize that I am sinful and guilty.

There can be no question for a Christian as to how he shall do good with his surplus, but there is only the question as to how to free himself from that sin which has evoked in him the desire to collect and preserve this surplus.

6

Act upon people with all the powers given you by God, and of these powers the chief is not property, but that degree of renunciation of the personal life which you have attained.

If you simply threw away your property, without giving anything to any one (of course, without tempting people, in order to get rid of it on purpose), and showed that you are not only just as joyous, quiet, good, and happy, without the property, as with it, but even more so, you would affect people much more powerfully, and would be doing them more good, than if you enticed them by the division of your surplus.

I do not say that we must not act upon others, help them; on the contrary, I consider life to be in this. But aid must be given with pure means, and not with impure means, with property.

But to be able to help, the main thing is, while we are ourselves not pure, – to purify ourselves.

XII

FAMILY RELATIONS

1

There is in all of us a strange feature in our relations between parents and children, and vice versa.

There is great love and there is not sufficient attention to their lives.

There is far from being the same serious comprehension of the life of a father, a daughter, that there is of that of a complete stranger, and I struggle for my own sake with this error, which I meet everywhere.

2

It is remarkable how exacting the men who themselves are opposed to Christ's teaching are to those who wish to live in conformity with this teaching.

It is enough only once in the presence of these people to express the idea that, strictly speaking, it would be necessary to act so and so in Christian fashion, for them later to be sure always to demand from the followers of the Christian teaching precisely such a behaviour, and no other. Without themselves sharing the Christian conception, they, none the less, make on a Christian the highest demands to which his consciousness is able to rise.

In general, imperfect and feeble men demand of others the manifestation of perfection, especially from those who are nearest to them, as though instinctively making demands on the convexity of others, which precisely correspond to their own concavities.

For a man who wishes to follow Christ's teaching, the constant intercourse with such spiritually feeble men is very useful, as a constant verification and reminder.

The demands which are made on him cover the whole surface of his life as though with a layer of sulphuric acid, which, penetrating into all the minutest indentations and chinks, burns out of them the last remainders of foreign substances.

One cannot imagine any better conditions for purifying oneself from one's blemishes.

3

It is evident that the university courses and the ruling science are a holiness for the believers. Put your hand on science, and there will rise sentiments which resemble those that would be evoked in an Orthodox at the profanation of images.

One is permitted to put his hands on ladies with locks and on all other kinds of ladies, but the class of young ladies who study is sacred. In offending this science, which is sacred to them, absolutely everything is forgotten.

XIII.

VARIA

1

The answer to this assertion is so simple:

" For the common good, courts, etc., are needed."

" Very well."

I am not called to establish this common welfare; even though I may think of the common welfare, I cannot think of it differently than Christ has taught me to think of it, that is, as of a condition of the kingdom of God.

Since I am not called to establish this welfare, my only duty in this respect will be to live in such a way as not to impair the common welfare; but I cannot live thus otherwise than by never and in no form doing any harm to others. But to condemn a man to prison is an evil for that man and for his relatives.

This is so clear and so simple to me, that I marvel how people can find an answer to it.

2

If we all, agreeing in the fundamental, the rational things, should also agree in the details, some one of us would have no reason for living, – he would have to die: we should be repeating each other and could not work out anything real for ourselves and for others.

Such an agreement would be a lie, as would be the agreement of all men as to what a horse represents to him who looks at it in front or behind: one would say that it has a long tail between its legs, while another would say that it has a short tail between its eyes. If we know what a horse is, we shall not deny that we see the same horse, that we see its various sides.

This is like the assertion that a melon which is cut lengthwise or across is not the same melon. If a whole is composed of all its parts, a full melon, no matter how it may be cut, is one and the same melon. All that is necessary is for it to be full and one whole.

The same thing may be cut from different sides, without impairing its entirety, – and if this is possible, it is only a cause for joy.

There are related minds of one type of character. And, no matter how a man may begin to cut (think), no matter from what side he may begin, he will find predecessors, who have done the same and who make his work easier.

October, 1887.

Before me is a sensible being, loving by nature, which can be happy only in the consciousness of this its loving, rational nature. I see that this being is unhappy, and I want to help it.

A horse has become entangled in the reins, – I want to disentangle it, but the horse will not let me.

Shall I pull at the reins, and get it worse entangled ?

It is evident that I shall not do so.

A man does not let me, – he thinks that I want to do worse.

Shall I continue what he does not want, not because he does not want the good for himself, but because he does not believe that I want his good ?

It is just as with the horse, when I pat it.

Reason is expressed in love. And so, where reason is dimmed, it cannot be reestablished through itself, but only through its consequence, love.

It is impossible to verify reason by reason, but it is possible to do so by love, its consequence.

With dimmed mind a man does not believe in mind ; as he has not the true mind, he does not know which is the true one, and which not. But even without knowing any proofs of reason, if a man sees that, its consequence is love, he recognizes that what has produced this love is rational, and then only will his contorted reason be mended, and coincide with the true reason.

Every child and every naive man considers that man wise who loves him, and those causes rational by which he is loved.

Only by the love of a rational man for him does another recognize the rational foundations of the love.

If I had such a love for those people to whom I communicate my rational foundations of life, a love like the one which a mother has for her child, no one would doubt the veracity of these foundations.

A rational consciousness of the truths which are revealed to us in our soul and, besides, by Christ, is a great, a very great good; but we are inclined to ascribe to this consciousness too great a significance. We rejoice too much at it, and we stop, as though we have reached everything we need.

It is indeed an enormous step, in comparison with that darkness in which we have lived; but still this is only a step, and even a tiny step, after which must follow the procession on that vast path which

is opened up to us in the application of this consciousness to life and love. It does not at once take the place of our cruel, bestial, bilious life, with its habits and passions, by which we have been living, but is poured into our soul by drops. That love, which by its essence demands an endless growth of transport, fills our soul but slowly.

My work over this is only beginning.

In this sense I rebuke myself for not being able to convince or vanquish people by means of that invincible love which is given us.

You walk about alone and think and, as it were, feel in yourself the conception of this force. It seems that I shall meet a man and shall at once drench and cover him with this invincible force which is being conceived in me; but I come to the affair, I meet the man, and instead of the indestructible sword, which I thought I was holding in my hand, it turns out to be a frail, brittle sprout, which I break at the first encounter, and throw away, and tread underfoot.

And again I grow and wait.

September, 1887.

4

You say: " Defend the truth against men who attack it."

But if it is the truth, what can the attacks of the lie do to it ? The fact that it is being attacked is the best proof that it is the truth. And if you are persecuted, rejoice and be merry, – prophets of the lie thus have always persecuted, and always will persecute, the prophets of the truth.

There is a period (a degree of faith, of course), during which the persecutions make many men doubt the truth; then there comes such a certitude that there is manifested indifference to the persecution, and then the persecutions give pleasure, showing obviously the weakness of the lie, which is recognized by the lie itself.

"Jesus, son of David," shout the representatives of the lie, although he does not touch them, " go away from us, – why hast Thou come to torment us ?"

And having shouted thus, they run away, not as fast as we should like them to, – but still they run away.

I have read M<sup>^</sup>dov's work on China. He is entirely devoted to the Chinese civilization, like every sensible, sincere man who knows Chinese life.

In nothing is the significance of ridicule seen better than in the case of China. When a man is unable to understand a thing, he ridicules it.

China, a country of 360 millions of inhabitants, the richest; most ancient, happy, peaceful nation, lives by certain principles. We have ridiculed these principles, and it seems to us that we have settled China.

6

Generally something mystical is seen in our view of life and death. But there is nothing of the kind.

I like my garden, I like to read a book, I like to pet my children. Dying, I am deprived of all this, and so I do not want to die, and I am afraid of death.

It may happen that my whole life is composed of such temporal, worldly desires and their gratification. If so, I cannot help but fear that my desires will come to an end. But if these desires and their gratification have been changed in me, giving way to other desires, – to fulfil God's will, to surrender myself to Him in the form in which I am now and in all the possible forms in which I may be, then, the more my desires have changed, the less death is, not only terrible to me, but the less even does it exist for me.

But if my desires will be completely changed, there is nothing but life, and there is no death.

To exchange the worldly, the temporal, for the eternal, this is the path of life, and we must walk on it.

Each of us knows how this is in his soul.

May, 1886.

A writer, an artist, needs, besides his external talent, two other things, – the first, to know positively what ought to be; the second, so to believe in what ought to be as to be able to represent what ought to be as though it were, as though I lived amidst it.

With the incomplete (unprepared) artists there is one of the things, but not the other. One has the ability to see what ought to be, as though it were, but he does not know what ought to be. With another it is the other way.

The majority of untalented productions belong to the second kind; the majority of so-called artistic productions belongs to the first kind.

People feel that they must not write what is, and that this will not be art, but they do not know what ought to be, and they begin to write what was (historic art), or, instead of writing what ought to be, they write what pleases them or their circle.

March, 1887.

Life must be guided by three commanders (it submits to them involuntarily), but for the personal question there arises the question: To what demands and to what extent must a man, for his good, surrender himself when all demands are made at the same time ?

He wants to eat, and so to go after the potatoes, to invent the best constructed tool for digging them out and to make the calculations and the drawing for it, and to go and wipe off the wet and freezing child and so take him into the house.

The whole of life consists of such trilemmas.

What is one to be guided by in them ?

God's will is manifested in three ways: to which of these manifestations is he to submit more especially ?

It is not possible to determine this gradually, – it has to be decided at once.

The chief mover (the only one in my opinion) is the service of men. This service may be accomplished in two ways : through mental and through material work.

But the determination which at a given moment is preferable, more lawful, is again decided only by the highest mover, which is not love alone, but love and comprehension, that is, comprehension which has risen to love, or love which is enlightened by the comprehension.

October, 1887.

I have convinced myself that a man cannot be beneficent if he does not lead an absolutely good life, and much less if he leads a bad life. By making use of the conditions of a bad life, for the purpose of taming this bad life, you make excursions into the sphere of beneficence.

I have convinced myself that beneficence can satisfy itself and others only when it shall be an inevitable consequence of a good life, and that the demands of this good life are very far from those conditions in which I live.

I have convinced myself that the possibility of beneficence to

people is the crown and precious reward of a good life, and that, in order to attain this aim, there is a long ladder, on the first rung of which I have not yet thought of stepping.

A man can do good to people only if others, and he himself, do not know that the good is being done, so that the right hand may not know what the left is doing, – as it says in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, that the alms may leave thy hands, without thy knowing to whom thou art giving.

You can do good only when your whole life is a service of the good.

Beneficence cannot be an aim, – it is inevitably the consequence and fruit of a good life. What fruit can there be on a dry tree, which has no live roots, nor live bark, nor branches, nor buds, nor leaves, nor flowers ?

We can stick on fruits, as apples and oranges are attached to the Christmas tree by means of ribbons, but the Christmas tree will not come to life through it, and will not bring forth oranges and apples.

Before thinking of the fruit, the tree has to be rooted, grafted, and grown large. But to root, graft, and grow the tree of the good, we have to think of many things and labour over many things, before we can rejoice at the fruits of the good, which we shall give to others.

It is possible to distribute strange fruits, hung up on a dry tree, but there is in that nothing which resembles the good.

10

A marvellous night. It was so clear to me that our life is the fulfilment of a duty imposed upon us. And everything is done so that the fulfilment may be joyous.

Everything is bathed in joy.

Sufferings, losses, death, – all this is good.

Sufferings produce happiness and joy, as labour produces rest, pain – the consciousness of health, the; death of near friends – the consciousness of duty, because this is the one consolation.

One's own death is a calming.

But the reverse cannot be said. Rest does not produce fatigue, health – pain, the consciousness of duty – death.

Everything is joy, so long as there is the consciousness of duty.

Man's life is to us a familiar wave, which is all clothed in splendour and joy.

11

It is frequently said (I used to say so) that the censorship, violence in general, attains the opposite results.

This is frequently said as a paradox; but this is the real truth, the obvious truth, just as indubitable as this, that by closing the shutter in the stove you help the combustion of the fuel.

If the censorship grieved us, this would prove that we are just as near-sighted as they.

They work for the same God, only we can believe that we are willing workers, while they are unwilling ones.

I remember, the other day I tried to count up those who shared our view, and I counted them all on my fingers; now I see that we must not count by men, but by different phenomena.

Now there, now here, amidst the darkness, sparks burn up.

I see them, and I rejoice at them.

12

It seems to me that the terror of death is physical, a physical ailment, like the toothache, rheumatism, and that we must act toward this condition precisely as toward physical suffering, without ascribing to it a hair's worth more significance.

Well, you have a toothache or a stomach-ache, or you are assailed by sadness and your heart is pained. Let it pain me, what is that to me? Either it will pain me and pass, or I shall indeed die from this pain. In either case there is nothing bad about it.

It seems to me that it is possible not to be afraid of one's pain; when one knows it from experience, this means, to take away from it what is tormenting.

This is physical pain, and to vanquish it, to make it inoffensive, we must agree with it, and not think, as we do, of a struggle with it. Else we prepare ourselves for the struggle, and in our imagination we exaggerate, are intimidated by it.

Of course, the chief means of security is the habit of thought, the conception of the carnal death.

If we represent death to ourselves and evoke in our soul what destroys its terror (there is only the terror, and not death itself), what you evoke is more than sufficient to destroy all the carnal terrors of madness and of solitary confinement.

Twenty-five years of madness or of solitary confinement, in any

case, only seem a prolongation of agony; but in reality there is no prolongation, because before the true life which is given us, an hour and a thousand years are one and the same.

13

If we remember and believe " Thy will be done," everything is easy, everything is good; but if we do not remember, do not believe, everything is difficult, everything is bad.

When I was a child, we had a simpleton, Grishka, for a gardener. In my childhood we used to go in the dark to hear him pray in the greenhouse. After the prayers and the verse about the righteous on the right hand, he began to converse with God :

« Thou art my master, my feeder, my doctor, my apothecary " (if he had been a woman, he would have said, " my midwife ").

And no matter what doctors, apothecaries, and midwives there may be, He, His law, none the less remains the chief thing above us, and He will do as He pleases.

From this it does not follow that we must not make use of what has been done by man for the alleviation of his material life. We must make use of everything, but within the limits of reason, that is, of what is clear, indubitable.

It is unquestionably necessary, when waiting for one's wife to give birth to a child, to call in a man who is expert in childbirth; also, to make use of everything for the alleviation of the incipient sufferings; but in advance to invent means for the alleviation of sufferings which have not yet come, is doubtful, the more so since the means is not in common use.

I am absolutely against chloroform and laughing-gas. God gives the childbirth, God will also give the strength, but to add strength –

There is a view about medicine, which is also ascribed to me, that medicine is evil and that we must free ourselves from it and in no case make use of it.

This view is incorrect.

There is another view, which is, that a man does and suffers, not because this is proper for him, but only because the doctor did not come in time, or was mistaken in the diagnosis, or did not find the proper medicine, or because medicine has not yet invented the right thing, though it will do so in a trice.

This view is unfortunately very common: it is preached by the doctors. It is at the same time the most injurious.

From the first mistake the body suffers at times, but from the second the spirit suffers always.

My relation to medicine will always be like this: I will not seek in advance any help against menacing death and sufferings, because, if I shall do so, all my life will pass in it, and yet my aim will not be attained; but I will make use of those means for protecting myself against death and suffering which are applied by men who are specially occupied with this matter, and who involuntarily make their way into my life, but only in the limits of what is confirmed to me by the obviousness of its action, by experience, by its diffusion, and by its accessibility, that is, by those means the use of which does not impair my moral necessities.

Here there constantly arise dilemmas, and their solutions are in the heart of each man.

I am convincing myself more and more that the less a man divines, and the more he surrenders himself to circumstances and provocations, the more happy he is, and the more fruitful is his activity.

14

How often a man will make a clever statement, and this clever saying will make him ridiculous !

He wanted to get married, but this witticism resulted in his being rejected.

A jester in the church cried, " Fire! " and the result of this jest was seven dead persons.

Is the jester to blame ? He wanted only to jest.

If a man, loading a gun, accidentally kills another, he will feel sorry and he will after that load his gun more carefully; but he will have no feelings of regret, no consciousness that he has acted wrongly.

If a jester, without considering the consequences, calls out " Fire!" in a Catholic church, and the frightened supplicants crush several people to death, the jester will feel more sorry still, and he will never jest so again, but he will have no repentance, no consciousness of a bad act.

But if a man, hating or despising another, makes fun of him, puts him in a ridiculous situation, pulls a chair away from under him, and the other, in falling, hurts his head, grows sick, and dies, there will, in addition to pain and compassion, appear also repentance, not because the man was killed, but because the motive of the act was contempt, hatred, malice toward a man. " By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned. For every idle word that people shall say, they will be made to answer."

What a profound truth this is!

At first it seems that this is far removed from practical life, something unnecessary, but it is something .very near, very necessary for writers, publicists, and all of us, who are constantly committing similar sins.

15

You ask me about the Buddhistic conception of Karma. This is what I thought lately. ■

In a dream we live almost as in waking. Pascal, I think, says that if we saw ourselves in a dream always in one position, and in waking in several, we should consider the dream to be reality, and reality a dream.

This is not quite correct.

Reality differs from a 'dream in that it is, above all else, more real, more true, so that I should say: if we did not know life to be more real than a dream, we should consider dreaming to be all life, and should never doubt but that it was real life.

Now, our whole life, from birth to death, with its dreams, is it not in its turn a dream which we take to be reality, – real life, – and in the reality of which we do not doubt, only because we do not know a more real life ?

I do not so much think, as I am convinced, that this is so.

As dreams in this life are a condition during which we live by the impressions, feelings, thoughts of the preceding life and gather strength for the subsequent life, even so our whole present life is a condition during which we live by the karma of the preceding more real life, during which we gather strength, work out the karma for the subsequent, more real life, from which we have emerged.

As we have thousands of dreams in this life, so this our life is one of thousands of such lives, into which we enter from this more real, actual, true life, from which we emerge, entering into this life, and to which we return, when we die.

Our life is one of the dreams of that more real life, and so forth, ad infinitum, up to the one, last, real life, – the life of God.

The birth and appearance of the conceptions about the world is a falling asleep; and the sweetest dream, death, is an awakening.

Early death, – a man has been awakened, he has not had his full sleep.

Late death, – he has had his full sleep and was sleeping feebly, when he was awakened.

Suicide, – this is a nightmare, which is destroyed by recalling that you are asleep, and you make an effort, and you wake up.

A man who lives by this life alone, who does not anticipate any other, – this is a heavy sleep.

The heaviest sleep, without dreams, is a semi-animal condition.

To feel in sleep what is going on around you, to sleep lightly, to be ready at any moment to awaken, – this is to recognize, though dimly, that other life, from which you have come and to which you return.

In sleep a man is always an egoist and lives alone, without the participation of others, without any connection with others.

In that life which we call real there is more connection with others, there is something resembling the love of our neighbours.

But in the one from which we have emerged and whither we go, this connection is closer still: love is no longer anything wished for, but real.

In that other life, for which even this is a preparation, the connection and the love is even closer and greater. And in this dream we feel all that may be and will be there.

The foundation of everything is already in us and penetrates all dreams.

I believe in it, see it indubitably, know it, and, dying, shall be glad that I am awakening to that more real world of love.

December, 1891.

16

I have transferred myself in thought to your situation and have suffered with you for that guard, who loads his gun against people, and is ready to kill and at the same time understands Christ's teaching.

I feel this with particular vividness, because I have for two years without interruption tried to grasp this mystery and to comprehend its phenomena, and I have lived in them.

The other day, as I was on my way to Byegich^vka, I fell in with a special train of soldiers with rods and full cartridges, who were travelling to pacify those starving people with whom we had lived the year before. They were all like your guard, with this difference only, that they understand what they are doing: this can be seen by their fugitive eyes and because they themselves acknowledge that it is a shame.

The kingdom of God is near, – at the door.

I cannot help but think so, and I shall live and die with this consciousness; the main thing is, that the time that I have left to live I want to live in such a way as to cooperate with this realization.

It is very likely that I am not doing what I ought to for this purpose, – maybe I am in error; but I know that only in a life which realizes the kingdom of God, in the search of the kingdom of God and of truth, does for me the whole meaning of life consist. I know that it is the same with you, and when I see, as now, that you, seeking the realization of the kingdom of God and of His truth, do not enter into struggle (there is no struggle for one who walks on the Christian path, – everything steps aside before him), but subject yourself to the whole force of temptation, I am agitated for you, I love you with a special, ecstatic love.

The temptations are from two sides: to weaken, to renounce (I am not afraid of this in your case), and to become proud of your strength. I know that you know this temptation better than I and look out for it, but I say what I think and what I feel for you.

The strength with which we conquer and will conquer is not ours, but the Father's, and the more we remove ourselves, the more real is this strength.

January, 1891.

17

All the time I was reading his letter I kept saying, " Amen."

What surprises me is how a man, who so profoundly and so soberly understands Christ's teaching, as he does, can expect anything from violence and its servants. This is a terrible deception I Something like the deception of money. It seems that the Tsar and money can do everything.

If a man, who has no clear conception as to what the good is, were told that neither the Tsar nor money can do any good, he would think it strange.

" What ? A man had no bread and he bought it for money and stilled his hunger. Or, – people were sitting in prison, and the Tsar commanded that they be let out, – is this not good ?"

It is not, because, if there were no money, nor everything which is connected with it, a man could not help but have bread; and if there were no Tsar, nor that which is connected with him, nobody would be sitting in a prison.

How wonderful! If I had still any doubt as to it being possible by

means of money to do good, I should have been fully convinced now, when I am buying corn for money and feeding several thousand people with it, that it is impossible with money to do anything but evil.

You will say, "Why, then, do you continue doing it?"

Because I cannot tear myself away, and because I do not experience anything but the most oppressive sensation, and so I think that I am not doing it for the gratification of my personality.

The burden is not in the labour, – the labour, on the contrary, is joyous and attractive, – nor in the occupation, for which I have no heart, but in the constant internal consciousness of shame before myself.

Please do not seek in these words of mine for any general meaning, – I write simply *au courant de la plume*, to a spiritually congenial man, who, I know, will understand me from hints, who will understand what I feel.

It makes me feel bad, or rather, awkward, when frequently men well disposed to me take me seriously, seeking and demanding a complete correspondence between my words and my acts.

" But how is it that you say one thing, and do another ?"

I am no saint, and I have never given myself out for a saint; I am a man who am carried away and sometimes, or, more correctly, always, say, not fully what I think and feel, not because I do not want to say it, but because I cannot, frequently exaggerate, and simply err.

This is so as regards words. As regards acts it is even worse.

I am an absolutely weak man, with vicious habits, who wishes to serve the God of truth, but who keeps constantly getting off the road.

The moment I am looked upon as a man who cannot err, every mistake of mine appears either a lie or a bit of hypocrisy.

But if I am understood to be a weak man, the disagreement between my words and my acts will be a sign of weakness, and not of lying and hypocrisy. And then I shall appear as what I really am: bad, but sincerely, with my whole soul, always, and even now, wishing to be absolutely good, that is, a good servant of God.

February, 1892.