

# **HOW TOLSTOY CONVERTED TO ISLAM**

**The Treatise of Famous Russian Writer  
about the Messenger of Islam and**

**MUHAMMAD  
(PBUH)**

**HIDDEN BOOK**

**TOLSTOY**

“Muhammad has always been standing higher than the Christianity. He does not consider god as a human being and never makes himself equal to God. Muslims worship nothing except God and Muhammad is his Messenger. There is no any mystery and secret in it.”

Leo Nikolayevich TOLSTOY

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“... May be it will seem strange saying these words by me who give preference to the original teachings of Christianity, but Islam by its appearance stands higher than Christianity, no doubt in it. If there is a choice between Christianity and Islam, then anybody with a sound reason should give preference to Islam with one God and its Prophet over Christianity which is full of complex theology of Trinity, baptism, prayers and various worships to Mary, mother of Jesus and saints and their images. It could not be possible vice versa.”

**Lev Nikolaevich TOLSTOY (1828-1910)**

L. N. Tolstoy, the famous Russian writer, has read the “The Sayings of Muhammad (PBUH)” of Abdullah al-Suhraverdi printed in India in 1908. He has compiled a treatise from his readings and published it in the “Posrednik” Russian printing house.

Russian people, specially the Russian intelligentsia loved Tolstoy as a person with a celestial power and knew that news about his conversion into Islam would have caused the powerful trend into Islam in Russian society. Therefore, the Russian secret agencies like KGB have tried to conceal the treatise, to make people to forget it and hindered its publishing. Tolstoy acquainted the Russian readers with the sayings of the prophet Muhammad. He gave a lot of importance to the topics such as ‘poverty’ and ‘equality’, intended to give a good lesson to the Russian people and those who betrayed the Russian people.

Tolstoy has emphasized on Islam as an only religion of the true justice and equality, the true brotherhood and devotion, even the only religion of love and respect to humanity...

### *Notes from the Publisher...*

#### **The Things Which Humans Should Know**

Tolstoy's treatise about Muhammad (PBUH), the messenger of Islam, has been known among the publishers for long years, but hidden from the readers in North America. Because of that the world-wide known writer's interest in Muhammad's narrations and compilation of them for the purpose to share them with the Russian nation was very important in the world of belief and culture.

It demanded serious attempts and research to discover and publish Tolstoy's treatise compiled from the narrations based on "Muhammad's (PBUH) Narrations" by Indian scholar Abdullah al-Suhravedi. Even though we knew how important it was Tolstoy's compilation and publish of the narrations of the Messenger of Islam, but we considered it better if we would turn out such collection into a project together with the supportive elements. And we decided to compile Tolstoy's writings and jokes relating to Muslims and Islam in this book in your hands under the different headings. We reached to official documents for the purpose to get the questioned letters and jokes, and then introduced them to you under the new edition preserving their originality.

Tolstoy's compilation and publish of Muhammad's (PBUH) narrations in the Tsarist Russia was a quite big event. We definitely knew it. Because it could help to imagine and increase awareness what feelings and thoughts Tolstoy lived during their compilation. But the most important was his desire to compile, to share with people and publish this small treatise as a sign of possibility of his being Muslim and admiration to Islam.

Our goal is not to attempt to betray subconscious thoughts by introducing not existing event, thought or writing rather than to uncover the hidden curtains over the existed things that we believe in them and introduce them with documents, knowledge and sources. For us his words "If human being has truly had a right of choice, every Christian and every human being with conscious would accept Mohammedanism: one God and His Messenger without doubt and suspicion" were valuable like the knowledge and meaning combining one book. And humans should know change in famous writer's culture and its pains.

**Rasih Yilmaz  
Faruk Arslan**

## Preface

### Tolstoy's Belief

The well-known writer Tolstoy's treatise about Muhammad (PBUH) has lots of characteristics. First of all, this treatise has been published in Christian Russia in 1909. It has been compiled by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, who was one of import writers of the world and Russia and genius classic of his time. Wealthy and owner of great properties, Leo Tolstoy is known by his sound religious believes and attendance in Truth. He has never been a chauvinist who discriminated in religion. His passion in Truth and disregard of secular values approached him to religious truth.

We do not think Leo Tolstoy will amaze anybody, especially the Canadian and American readers who are cultured and knowledgeable in religion and are forerunners in the contemporary world with his treatise, which is the result of his admiration toward Muhammad (PBUH) and religion Islam.

Leo Tolstoy has compiled this treatise and published it together with his other books in 1909 during the Tsarist time. With this work he acquainted his Russian readers with the narrations of Prophet Muhammad. We can bravely say that in this way he impacted on their religious thought and education. In here the personality of Muhammad (PBUH) and his divine thoughts together with the introduction of Tolstoy, who was considered adherent believer in Russia at that time increased influence of the book.

During the time of USSR, L.N. Tolstoy's works have continuingly been published except his "The Sayings of Muhammad which were not compiled in the Qur'an". In the first years of USSR, peoples were forced to accept the "Atheism". Many who did not accept this ideology were executed in 1938 and have being commemorated as the victims of Repression. In such period of time, Leo Tolstoy's case was not exceptional.

This is an example for such censored approach for his treatise: in 1978 (after 70 years of publication of the treatise) when authors wanted to translate and publish the letter of Y. Vekilova, a wife of Turkish General to Leo Tolstoy, as an additional page to the introduction page of this treatise in "Azerbaijan", the largest journal of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Censor Committee of Baku did not permit that. The reason was the genius Russian writer Tolstoy's highly praised and positive words about the religion of Islam and its prophet Muhammad. The editor held up publication of the journal because of that and applied to Moscow for permission to publish that letter. After the permission of Moscow the treatise and letters were introduced to the readers. Thus, for the first time the letters in this treatise were published in Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani Turkish and Russian in 1978.

Tolstoy's treatise and letters became a resonance. However, Tolstoy, a genius writer and admirer of Islam, made a methodological mistake when he chose a title for his treatise. We consider Islam a religion which was not officially banded, but it was impossible to learn it properly in Russia. That's why Tolstoy made a methodological mistake when he chose a title for his treatise.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union which continued only 70 years and suppress of religious values, L. Tolstoy's treatise has been published in his own language Russian in 1990. However, Tolstoy's mistake was repeated by Kayibov, a publisher of Azerbaijani edition of the treatise. Thus, we corrected this title mistake accepting it as a technical mistake and according to Islamic terminology. During the time when Tolstoy published it, the treatise was titled as "Muhammad's Words that were not compiled in the Qur'an". We consider it faulty. The Qur'an is the Divine Word. Narrations are the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is true that Muhammad was a selective servant, but he was a man in somehow.

Thus, we considered it right to introduce Tolstoy's treatise as "The Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad".

We'd like to touch to another topic. In Russia there was a Russian lady Valeria Porokhova who embraced Islam. She married to an Arab and lived in Saudi Arabia for 11 years. During this time she learned Islam very well and became a Muslim. She translated the Qur'an into Russian and theologians admired her translation. Mrs. Porokhova was courageous enough to enlighten the topics introduced by Tolstoy and Islam seriously in the Russian media.

Mrs. Porokhova first time declared in the Soviet media that Tolstoy had embraced Islam and made a will to bury him as a Muslim. The Soviet government tried to hide this truth for long years. Mrs. Porokhova courageously uncovered this important document and published it. According to her discoveries, Tolstoy was buried according to Islamic rites. Its proof is inexistence of crucifixion, a Christian sign, on his grave.

Russian people, especially Russian intelligentsias loved L.N. Tolstoy as a man who owned divine strength and the news about his conversion to Islam could start the strong influx to Islam. That's why the assumption of his conversion to Islam had been hidden. The Russian government could never allow itself to uncover the respect and admiration of such a genius Tolstoy to Islam and his conversion and for this reason; Tolstoy's treatise about the sayings of Muhammad (PBUH) had been hidden from readers for long years.

Prof. Dr. Telman Khurshidoglu Aliyev  
Vaqif Tehmezoglu Khalilov  
Baku-Azerbaijan  
April 2005

## INTRODUCTION

### *A writer who was an admirer of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): TOLSTOY*

To know the assumption that Tolstoy gave his breath as a Muslim is very delighted event for us. That's why it is an honor for me to contribute an effort to the translation of such a genius's compilation in English.

When I read a report of Capitan Cousteau's conversion into Islam in French magazine "Match", I could not believe first. I showed the same amazement when I read an article about Clement Torrez in the same magazine in May, 1983. Torrez was a General Secretary of the French Communist Party. He said: "Humanity will turn to his true direction of Kaaba, instead of communism..." and posed in front of the newspapers and magazines together with his Palestinian wife. Of course, these names were not the only famous people who converted into Islam. If we search the history, Prince Bismarck, Goethe and others, A Russian A. Pushkin and others could be added. One of them is Polosin, who was chairman of the Committee of the Supreme Soviet on Freedom of Conscience became a Muslim in the beginning of 2000. Almost nobody knew this news in Turkey, except journalist Alev Alatli.

Polosin declared in front of the members of Russian media: "I confess in public that I am neither an Orthodox priest nor follower of Church any more. I am a Muslim... I confess in public that I witnessed in the only true religion as a follower of a true faith, which is the tradition of all prophets of all religions with divine books since Abraham. I decided to live according to my faith and I became a Muslim."

If the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Turkish Republic announces his conversion into Christianity, would it not cause dilemmas? And how could it sound in Russia which is the fortress of the Orthodox Christianity? Although, the news of Polosin's conversion in 1999, who was chairman of the Committee of the Supreme Soviet on Freedom of Conscience (equal to the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Turkish Republic), had not been heard by anybody until Alev Alatli spoke out.

Polosin graduated from the Philosophy Faculty of MGU and from the Moscow Ecclesiastical Seminary and from Academy of Diplomacy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I read this stormy news from Alev Alatli's book titled as "Not an Enlightenment behind Gogol, but a Mercy", I could not believe first. I thought it was impossible that such an event was not heard. However, I was wrong when I researched further.

When Polosin was asked about the danger to his life after his confession of his conversion, he said: "All of us are temporary in life. At the end, all of us will depart from this world. It's better to depart from it submitting myself in Truth instead of obeying to the delusions of human being!"

Polosin also declared the conversion of his wife into Islam and embraced a new name Ali, and now he is the last famous Christian who became Muslim in the Russian steppes I knew.

In 1978, the well-known thinkers Maurice Bucaille and Roger Graudy also converted into Islam. When R.Graudy became a Muslim, we all heard the same rejoice from him as a

converter. These people once were think-tanks of Communism. Who knows how many people converted into Islam openly or secretly like Tolstoy and we do not know their names.

Tolstoy confessed his conversion during the peak of fast spread of Communism. Such brave action demanded the one to consider the torture and execution. But Tolstoy did it. He did it in the peak of his career and independence. It is hard to find out any reason in materialism for his conversion. Nobody could say: "He was destitute, and needed a shelter."

Tolstoy introduced the narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Russian people intentionally. In anyhow, Communism or its low level Socialism, which were faulty from their foundation, did not attract him and he chose to live as a Muslim instead of taking advantage from the privileges in the peak of his career.

"Muhammad has always been standing higher than the Christianity. He does not consider god as a human being and never makes himself equal to God. Muslims worship nothing except God and Muhammad is his Messenger. There is no any mystery and secret in it."

When he wrote it in his letter to Elena Vekilova he openly expressed his admiration to Muslims and the religion Islam. In following chapters, where there are some nuances, he called attention to Islam's being free from falling into the errors of other religions and appraised the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a last and perfect religion and criticized the superstitions in other religions.

The terms he mostly chose from the narrations of the Prophet Muhammad were the words 'destitute' and "equality" and his intention was to educate the Russian people and those who betrayed them. By compiling these narrations in his book, Tolstoy emphasized that the only source of true justice and equity, and true brotherhood and devotion is in Islam...

We could confirm the source of many narrations that Tolstoy compiled. Perhaps, the narrations that we could not confirm their sources were the narrations which had not been included in "Kutub- u Sitte" and sayings against the superstitions which are "the things that do not reconcile with the reason and shadow the truth" as Tolstoy established in his letter. Tolstoy would never contribute such highly praised words to Islam if he did not read and searched the Qur'an or learned it from the interpretations.

Thus, this translation into English of Tolstoy's treatise gains four identifications. First, the identification when the narrations were translated from Arabic into Russian... Second, the identification when the narrations were translated from old Russian into new Russian.. Third, the identification when the narrations were translated from Russian into Azerbaijani, and the fourth, when they were translated from Azerbaijani language into English. For this reason, the languages that comply with the national culture in the letters and in the narrations need more research.

We are thankful to our elders Prof. Telman Aliyev and Vaqif Khalilov, who translated these letters and treatise into Azerbaijani language, Rasih Yilmaz, a head of the Karakutu Publishing House and who waited in anxiety and great interest until the treatise was translated into English and introduced to the readers, and also to Faruk Arslan, the General Manager of Astra Canada Inc.

Arif Arslan  
May 2005-07-26 Istanbul



## **Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy**

### ***The Story of the Genius Writer***

Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy was born on August 28, 1828 at his family's estate at Yasnaya Polyana close to City Tula as the fourth son of the rich and wealthy family.

His mother shortly passed away after his birth. His father Count Nikolay Tolstoy took the responsibility to educate him. In his childhood he learned French and German. His grandmother and aunts played a significant role in his growth as a member of a noble family. When he was nine, his father was poisoned and killed. Shortly afterwards, he lost his grandmother and his aunts took his responsibility together with his siblings.

In 1844 he started to study the Eastern languages in the University of Kazan. He started to lead a bohemian life. Due to alcohol, women and gambling, he left his studies. In 1845, he started to study law, but could not graduate and two years later he was expelled from the University. When he was 19, he became very rich man as one of the heirs of the family inheritance. He also inherited the estate in Yasnaya Polyana and continued to live in a house he loved so much since his childhood.

He went to the Caucasus in 1851, the journey which left very deep traces in his memories. Tolstoy joined an artillery regiment and was a student in a military school. In 1853, his duty was to fight against the Ottomans. In 1854, he was transferred to the Crimean army and was transferred to the front. He left his duty in army in 1856.

He wrote his first novel, *Childhood*, where he wrote his childhood memories, in the winter of 1851 when he was 23.

He wrote about the life styles of the Caucasian nations in “Haji Murad” in 1852 and “Kazaks”; and his memories about the Crimean was in “The Stories of Sebastopol” in 1855.

He traveled to Germany in 1857, then to England, Belgium and Switzerland, and got to know the well-known intelligentsia there.

He arrived to Russia in 1861 and married 18-year-old Sophia Behrs, the youngest daughter of Dr. Behrs, a well-known doctor of Moscow. He left the capital and began to live in his village to lead a quiet life and started to study literature and care for his family.

In 1863, he started to write his major novel “War and Peace” and completed it in 1869.

In 1873, he wrote *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's next major work and completed it in three years which is full with the loss of his three children and aunts.

He wrote his confessions under the impact of death of his sick brother where he would describe his mixed feelings.

He started to write "Ressurrection", the novel which was the third major novel after "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina" in 1876, when he completed "Anna kareninaq". He lived great turmoils and changes in his outlook to the world, humans and life adn wrote novels where he quesitoned God, humanhood, life and death and where the theology could be felt heavily. In the novels and stories such as "What is the Religion", "What Men Live By", "Death of Ivan Ilych", "The Three Hermits" and "The Manifestation of Death" these topics are discussed.

In 1891-92, he lost his peace with his spiritual experience caused by the extreme hunger and diseases in Russia and short afterwards the death of his beloved daughter Vanishka who was 7.

In 1896, he started to write "Resurrection" and completed it in 1899. In the same year, he wrote "Kreutzer Sonate" where his spiritual restlessness was expressed.

He left his home in Yasnaya Polyana, when the family arguments which started right away after the marriage and were not tolerable any more and wrote his last letter to his wife on November 9, 1910 and when Tolstoy was 82.

After leaving his estate on the urge to live as a wandering ascetic, Tolstoy, whose search of self, meaning of life and God lasted until the end of his life, died of pneumonia at 6:45, on November 20, 1910, at a remote railway junction Astapov, through the route Odessa-Istanbul to Bulgaria.

By his will, he was buried in quite and shady spot in Yasnaya Polyana, where he spent all his childhood, which he descriped the happiest period of his life and played with his siblings.

# **I CHAPTER**

## **MUHAMMAD (PBUH)**

*(L. N. Tolstoy have read Abdullah Suhrawardy's "The Sayings of Prophet Muhammad" printed in london in 1908. He compiled a treatise from those narrations and published it in "Posrednik" Publishing House in October, 1908 in Russia under the title as "Muhammad's Sayings Which Were Not Included In The Qur'an". The first chapter of this book is Tolstoy's compiled sayings of Muhammad. The title of Tolstoy's treatise is wrong methodologically. So, we changed it as "The Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).*

*“We have God’s light in our hearts, and its name is consciousness.”*  
**Tolstoy**

### **Universal Suggestion**

In previous chapters we have expressed Tolstoy’s admiration to Islam’s great prophet Muhammad. This admiration was because of his reading the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his deep understanding of the book compiled by the great Muslim scholar Suhrawardy from India. He was full of desire to introduce Prophet Muhammad and the love to him to the Russian people who were deprived from Prophet Muhammad and also to his friends and his circle among Russian intelligentsia. Therefore, he compiled this treatise of sayings which is “full of universal suggestions and warnings”.

It is impossible to think that Prophet Muhammad’s words and actions, his tolerance, morality, justice, honesty and many other universal values could not attract sane people as Tolstoy expressed. Tolstoy, like one of the honest people in the world, could notice this delicacy in the Prophet Muhammad and honestly declared it and indeed, also wished to share his feelings with others. Here is his will being realized by his chosen sayings and this treatise in your hands.

**"O God! Pardon my sins, and open for me the gates of Your compassion."**

"The Prophet Muhammad was sleeping under the date tree. Suddenly, an infidel a dragger in his hand appeared and said: "O Muhammad, who will save you from me now?" The Prophet answered: "God!". In a sudden shock, Dusur dropped his dragger. The Prophet took it and said: "And now, who will save you from me?" Dusur answered in fear: "Nobody!". The Prophet set him free and said: "'Stand up and go!" When Dusur left, he said: "You were better than me." The Prophet said: "I have more tight to be so." Dusur became a Muslim by testifying "And I testify that there is no god except Allahand you are His Messenger." He became one of the Prophet's best friends." (1)

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"O Lord grant to me the love of Thee; grant that I love those that love Thee; grant that I may do the deed than win Thy love; make thy love dearer to me than self, family and wealth." (2)

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"Say what is true, although it may be bitter and displeasing to people." (3)

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"Assist your Muslim brother, whether he be an oppressor or oppressed. "Bu how shall we do it when he is an oppressor?" enquired a companion. Muhammad replied, "Assisting an oppressor by forbidding and withholding him from oppression." (4)

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When My servant draws close to me by the span of a palm, I draw close to him by the space of a cubit, and when he draws close to Me by the space of a cubit, I draw close to him by the space (covered) by two hands, and when he draws close to Me by the space (covered by) two hands, I go in hurry towards him." (5)

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"O Lord! Keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor: and raise me amongst the poor." Aisha asked: "Why, O the Messenger of God?" "Because they will enter to Paradise fourty spring earlier than the rich. O aisha! Love the poor and make them to come to the scholars' gatherings so that God will approach to you in the Day of Judgement."

"O Lord! Keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor: and raise me amongst the poor." (6)

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“The most excellent of alms is that of a man of small property, which he has earned by labor, and from which he gives as much as he is able.” (7)

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“No person has drunk a better draught than that of anger which he has swallowed for God's sake.” (8)

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“No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” (9)

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“Hell is veiled in delights, and Heaven in hardships and miseries.” (10)

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“God says, 'O Man! Only follow My laws, and you shall become like unto Me, and then say, 'Be' and behold, It is.'” (11)

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“Do not exceed in eating so that you overcharge your hearts.” (12)

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“The angels asked, 'O God! Is there anything of Your creation stronger than rocks?' God said, 'Yes; iron is stronger than rocks, for it breaks them.' The angels said, 'O Lord! Is there anything of Your creation stronger than iron?' God said, 'Yes; fire is stronger than iron, for it melts it.' And the angels said, 'O defender! Is there anything of Your creation stronger than fire?' God said, 'Yes; water overcomes fire; it kills it and makes it cold.' Then the angels said, 'O Lord! Is there anything of Your creation stronger than water?' God said, 'Yes; wind overcomes water: it agitates it and puts it in motion.' They said, 'O our cherisher! Is there anything in Your creation stronger than wind?' God said, 'Yes, the children of Adam, giving alms; that is, those who give with their right hands and conceal it from their left, they overcome all.'”(13)

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“God said, 'I was a hidden treasure. I would fain be known. So I created Man.'” (14)

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“Verily you are ordered the divine commandments, then forsake them not; you are forbidden the unlawful, then do not fall therein; there are fixed boundaries, then pass not beyond them;

and there is silence on some things without their being forgotten, then do not debate about them.” (16)

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“Whoever is kind to His creatures, God is kind to him; therefore be kind to man on earth, whether good or bad; and being kind to the bad, is to withhold him from badness, thus in heaven you will be treated kindly.” (17)

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“The Prophet was asked: “What is the foundation of the religion?” he said: ”Wish for your brother that which you wish for yourself. Wish not for your brother that which you wish not for yourself.” (18)

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“The measure of a Muslim’s sincerity is his humility before the things which he does not have a power over .”(19)

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“God has made a straight road, with two walls, one on each side of it, in which are open doors, with curtains drawn across. At the top of the road is an Admonisher who says, "Go straight on the road, and not crooked;" and above this Admonisher is another who says to any who pass through these doorways, "Pass not through these doors, or verily you will fall." Now, the road is Islam; and the open doors are those things which God has forbidden; and the curtains before the doors the bounds set by God; the Admonisher is the Qur’an, and the upper Admonisher God, in the heart of every Mumin (Muslim).”

(Note: There is some addition in this saying which Tolstoy compiled. The sayings from its own source is as follows:

One man asked: “What is the straight path?” The Prophet answered: “The Prophet Muhammad left us in the beginning of this path. The other end of this path leads to the Garden. There are other paths in the right and left of this path. There are people on these paths who invite people to follow their paths. Whoever strays from my way will go to the Hell. And whoever continues his way on my path will enter to the Garden.” Ibn Mas’ud read this verse after he interpreted it:

“Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) path: thus doth He command you. that ye may be righteous.” (20)

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“Muhammad said, "It is indispensable for every Muslim to give alms." The companions asked, "But if he has not anything to give?" He said, "If he has nothing, he must do a work with his hand, by which to obtain something and benefit himself; and give alms with the remainder." They said, "But if he is not able to do that work, to benefit himself and give alms to others?" The Rasul (Muhammad) said, "Then he should assist the needy and the

oppressed." They asked, "What if he is not able to assist the oppressed?" He said, "Then he should exhort people to do good." They asked, "And if he cannot?" He said, "Then let him withhold himself from doing harm to people; for verily that is as alms and charity for him." (21)

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“Every eye is an adulterer; and every woman perfumes herself, and goes to an assembly where men are, wishing to show herself to them, with a look of lasciviousness, is an adultress.” (22)

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“Muhammad said, "O Wabisah! Did you come to ask what is goodness and what is badness?" Wabisah said, "Yes, I came for that." Then He joined his fingers and struck them upon Wabisah's breast, that is made a sign towards his heart, and said, "Ask the question from your own heart." This he repeated three times aloud and said, "Goodness is a thing from which your heart finds firmness and rest; and badness is a thing which throws you into doubt, although men may acquit you." (23)

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“If you do not become owner of your religion, you will not become heir of God’s kingdom. And if you do not love each other, you will not attain to your goals.”(24)

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“ Meekness and modesty are two branches of Iman (Faith); and vain talking and embellishing are two brances of hypocrisy. (25)

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“It is better to sit alone than in company with the bad; and it is better to sit with the good than alone. And it is better to speak words to a speaker of knowledge than to remain silent; and silence is better than bad words.” (26)

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“Whoever suppresses his anger, when he has in his power to show it, God will give him great reward.” (27)

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“All actions are judged by the motive prompting them. (Actions are indeed by intention)” (28)

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“Those who earn an honest living are the beloved of God.” (29)

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“The sincere truthful is the one who is patient against injustice and pardons.” (30)

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“Humility is the foundation of all good actions.” (31)

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“No man has a faith until he has humility and understanding.” (32)

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“Be persistent in good actions.” (33)

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“ To the light I have rushed towards and in the light I live.” (34)

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“The best of you is the one is thankful to God in prosperity, and resigned to His will in adversity. He will be rewarded by God contionously.” (35)

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“Mankind would not go astray if they avoided from disputation.” (36)

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“The greatest enemies of God are those who are entered into Islam, and do acts of infidelity, and who without cause, shed the blood of man.” (37)

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“The grave is the first stage of the journey into eternity.” (38)

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“The most excellent Jihad is the conquest of one’s own self.” (39)

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“An hour's contemplation is better than a year's adoration.” (40)

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“Prayer is the union with God of the Faithful.” (41)

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“Death is a bridge that unites friend with friend.” (42)

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“Poverty is my pride.” (43)

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"None of you must die but with resignation to the will of God, and with hope for his beneficence and pardon." (44)

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“The adultery of the eye is to look with desire on the wife of another; and the adultery of the tongue is to utter what is forbidden. And the parts of the body either prove it or reject.” (45)

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“The most disgusting in God’s presence is hypocrisy in worship done by male or female.” (46)

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“God will have mercy on those who work for themselves and not for those who beg while they are able to work.” (47)

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“Verily the reward is as great as the misfortune; that is, the more unfortunate and calamitous one is, the greater and more perfect his reward. And verily, when God loves a people, He entangles them in misfortune; therefore, he who is resigned to the pleasure of God, in misfortune, for him is God's favor.” (48)

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“Muhammad used to say after making the profession of faith, "O Lord I supplicate to You for firmness in faith, and inclination towards the straight path, and for Your aid in being grateful to You, and in adoring You in every good way; and I supplicate You for an innocent heart which shall not incline to wickedness and for a true tongue. I supplicate You to guide me to all which You know to be virtuous and to preserve me from all which You know to be vicious. I supplicate to You to forgive me my faults for You know them all.” (49)

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Do you know what disgraces the foundation of Islam, and ruins it?

“The errors of the learned destroy it, the disputations of the hypocrites, and the orders of rulers who have astrayed.” (50)

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“Women are the twin halves of men.” (51)

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“The calamity of knowledge is forgetfulness; and to waste knowledge is to speak of it to the unworthy. The learned are those who practise what they know.” (52)

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“God takes away the true knowledge by giving death to scholars not by wiping it in the memories of humans. At the end, no scholar will be left you. Humans will start to make the ignorant their leaders, will ask them some questions and they will judge without knowledge. Therefore, they will lose the true path and get lost.” (53)

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“The time is near in which nothing will remain of Islam but its name, and of the Qur’an but its mere appearance, and the mosques of Muslims will be destitute of knowledge and worship; and the learned will be the worst people under the heavens; and contention and strife will issue from them, and it will return upon themselves.” (54)

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“The pursuit of knowledge is a divine commandment for every Muslim; and to waste knowledge on those who are unworthy of it is like putting pearls, jewels, and gold on the necks of swine.” (55)

\*\*\*

“Knowledge is of three kinds; one commands an action, the reward of which is clear, then do it; another forbids an action which leads astray, abstain from it; and in another arise contradictions, resign that to God.” (56)

\*\*\*

“The believers never die. They just move from finite world to the eternal one.” (57)

\*\*\*

“A true Mumin is thankful to God in prosperity, and resigned to His will in adversity.” (58)

\*\*\*

“Trust in God, but tie it (your camel).” (59)

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“The world and all things in it are valuable; but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.” (60)

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“I surely know that everything is finite except God. Nobody told this word except Lebid.” (61)

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“Seek protection in truth and avoid lying.” (62)

\*\*\*

“The true believer never disgraces others, do wrongs and talk vainly.” (63)

\*\*\*

“Abstain exploring the faults of people, especially if you know that you do have the same.” (64)

\*\*\*

“Nothing is better than being silent and illuminating the soul with the eternal goodness.” (65)

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“When you speak, speak the truth; perform when you promise; discharge your trust; commit not fornication; be chaste; have no impure desires; withhold your hands from striking, and from taking that which is unlawful or evil.” (66)

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“God orders to be gentle and modest, so that nobody wrongs others.” (67)

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“That person is not of us who inviteth others to aid him in oppression; and he is not of us who fighteth for his tribe in injustice; and he is not of us who dieth in assisting his tribe in tyranny.” (68)

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“Love makes the man deaf and dumb.” (69)

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“No man has believed perfectly, until he wish for his brother that which he wishes for himself.” (70)

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“The Muslim is the one from whose hands and tongue others are safe. The Mu'min is the one whom people feel safe with. ” (71)

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“Those who oppress others by tongue even, their worship cannot purify them.” (72)

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“Shall I not inform you of a better act than fasting, alms, and prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots.” (73)

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“ God has not created anything better than Reason, or anything more perfect, or more beautiful than Reason; the benefits which God giveth are on its account; and understanding is by it, and God's wrath is caused by disregard of it.” (74)

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“Verily, God is mild, and is fond of mildness, and He gives to the mild what he does not to the harsh.” (75)

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“He is not strong and powerful who throweth people down; but he is strong who withholdeth himself from anger.” (76)

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“ Riches are not from an abundance of wordly goods, but from a contented mind.” (77)

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Abdullah ibn Ma'sud narrated: “The Prophet slept upon a mat, and got up very marked on the body by it. We said: "O Messenger of God! If you had ordered us, we would have spread a soft bed for you." Lord Muhammad said: "What business have I with the world? I am a man on horseback, who stands under the shade of a tree, then leaves it." (78)

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“Look to those inferior to yourselves, so that you may not hold God's benefits in contempt.” (79)

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“When you see a person, who has been given more than you in money and beauty; then look to those who have been given less. Look to those inferior to yourselves, so that you may not hold God's benefits in contempt.” (80)

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“A man came to Muhammad and said, "Verily I love you." He replied, "Look to what you say," and repeated the same twice. Lord Muhammad said, "If you are sincere, then prepare yourself for poverty: for poverty reacheth him who loveth me quicker than a torrect reacheth the sea.” (81)

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“Man should give alms for each of his joints for each of God’s day. Doing justice between two people is charity; and asisting a man upon his beast, and lifting his baggage is charity; and pure, comforting words are charity; every step you take to the mosque is charity, and removing that which is an inconvenience to wayfarers, such as thorns and stones, is a charity.” (82)

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“God says, " Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him." (83)

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"There is a polish for everything that taketh away rust; and the polish for the heart is th remembrance of God." (84)

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“Every good act is charity.” In another narration it is said: “Your smiling in your brother's face is charity; and your exhorting man to virtuous deeds is charity; and your prohibiting the forbidden is charity; and your showing men the road, in the land in which they lose it, is charity; and your assisting the blind is charity.” (85)

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“Once the Prophet met a woman who embraced every child she met due to her grief of loss her child among the prisoners of war. The Prophet said mentioning the woman: Do you think this woman will cast her own child into the fire?" Those present said, "No." Muhammad said, "Verily God is more compassionate on His creatures, than this woman on her own child." (86)

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“The holder of a monopoly is a sinner and an offender. (87)

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“Give the laborer his wage before his perspiration be dry.” (88)

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“Deal gently with the people, and be not harsh; cheer them and condemn them not. Ye will meet with many 'people of the Book' who will question thee, what is the key to Heaven? Reply to them (the key to Heaven) to testify to the truth of God, and to do good work.” (89)

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“Be merciful to mankind, so that God has mercy on you.” (91)

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“To comfort somebody, make somebody to love justice and truth is better than to obey to the rules willingly or unwillingly.” (92)

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“To forgive a provocator who is under your control will be rewarded before God.” (93)

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# **CHAPTER LETTERS**

## **The Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad**

The Russian writer L.N. Tolstoy has read “Abdullah al-Suhrawardy’s published work in India in 1908 titled as “The Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad”. He compiled a treatise from his readings and published it in “the Posrednik” Publishing House (October, 1908) under the title “The Sayings of Muhammad not included in the Qur’an”. As a religious man, Tolstoy knew religious subjects well. His opinions about Islam can better be understood with his letters to Elena Vekilova, a Russian woman married to the Azerbaijani man General Ibrahim Agha on March 1, 1909.

In that period in Russia, the children of these parents wanted to convert into Islam for the sake of peace of their nations (Azerbaijani Turks). Even though the parents belonged to another religion, they did not force their children to stay in their religion. Being faithful to this view of parenting, Elena Vekilova wrote a letter to her contemporary Tolstoy whom she valued a lot and sought his suggestion to make a choice by writing: “What are you suggesting regarding this. What should I do?” And Tolstoy never became late to respond to this question.

**“The last and greatest religion Islam...”**

**Tolstoy**

“... As far as the preference of Mohammedanism to Orthodoxy is concerned..., I can fully sympathize with such conversion. To say this might be strange for me who values the Christian ideals and the teaching of Christ in their pure sense more than anything else, I do not doubt that Islam in its outer form stands higher than the Orthodox Church. Therefore, if a person is given only two choices: to adhere to the Orthodox Church or Islam, any sensible person will not hesitate about his choice, and anyone will prefer Islam with its acceptance of one tenet, single God and His Prophet instead such complex and incomprehensible things in theology such as the Trinity, redemption, sacraments, the saints and their images, and complicated service.

Why? Because the Trinity is full with secrets of Mother Mary, the saints and their images, and hard worships... It could not be possible otherwise. It was impossible that Muhammadanism would not become dominant over the Church belief in the era when the false beliefs overpass the true essence of religion. Let us pay attention to this point that: Muhammadanism has appeared in the world 600 years later of Christianity. Everything is developing and becoming perfect in the world. As every man develops, all humanity is on the path of being perfect. The essence of life of mankind is in their beliefs. The perfect nature of religion consists of making the religion easy to understand and explaining every anonymous opinions.

The great thinkers of mankind have always strived to explain the darkest points of religious virtues since the ancient times. First of all, they considered them the foundations of great religions. They were introduced in Vedas (Hinduism), and then in the teachings of Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tse, Jesus and Muhammad. It means all the founders of all religions brought the new understanding to the ancient religion and made it easier to understand and reasonable. They were human beings, so, they could not make the religion purified from the old understandings and mistakes.

If we consider that these people have not made mistake, therefore, they included some unnecessary and strange views to make the religion acceptable by their followers who were below from the prophets' standings. As the result, it was difficult for mankind to see some reality. As much as you research the religions, you see how the face of reality was covered and made dark by the changes of the theologians interpretations.

In regard to these topics, in the most ancient religions there are many strange beliefs and every kind of superstitions and they cover the truth. And it is more evident in ancient religions such as Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity and Judaism as well and even very little, they also exist in the latest and greatest religion Islam...” (\*)

(\*) Tolstoy's letter to Elena Vekilova, written on March 15, 1909, was published in the journal “Literaturniy Azerbaidzhan”, No: 12, 1978, p. 114

**“There is God’s infinite light in our hearts. Its name is consciousness.”  
Tolstoy**

Six years passed. But neither the heart of father Ibrahim Agha took it easy nor mother Elena Vekilova was relaxed. Their main worry was what religion their sons would prefer to. God bestowed them the third child, too. Their daughter Reyhan was in her threes. They were discussing to whom to go and get advice. The authorities and religious clergies were unable to support them in this family dispute.

It also worried general Ibrahim Agha’s elder son Boris (Faris) who studied at the Peterburg Technological Institute and the second son Qleb (Qalib) who was an officer in the Military School named after Alekseev in Moscow.

“Who are we? Which nation do we belong to?”, they questioned themselves.

They often addressed their problems to their parents to seek solution.

Later on, Faris (Boris) narrated:

“I was 19 years old. The idea to convert into the religion of Muhammad did not leave me in peace together with the busy schedule of study. The conditions of 1904-1905 should be convenient to realize my idea. The Russian-Japan war forced the Tsarist government to take liberal steps under the pressure of the revolutionary spirit of the Russian people.

In 1904 the declaration about the “Religious freedom” was passed on. Those who converted to another religion from their forefather’s religion were given permission to convert to their original religion. It seemed that to submit an application to convert was very simple. My experienced parents did not advise me to explore my intention to the supporters of Orthodox Christianity in my first years in Peterburg. Even my mother was very careful when she wrote a letter to Leo Tolstoy. Therefore, I had to delay implementing my intention to get rid of the unwanted events. My dad (Ibrahim Agha) and mother (Elena Vekilova) had already decided that nobody could answer to this family question except Leo Tolstoy who was a writer with tolerance and deep understanding.”

On March 2, 1909, mother Elena Vekilova wrote a letter to Tolstoy from Tiflis and explained the family struggle in searching for the true faith.

“Our dearest teacher Lev Nikolayevich!

I am not able to find an appropriate word to apologise before you for disturbing you with my letter. I know that there are many who seek your advice like me. In spite of that I am applying to you. Because the life has been introducing me a puzzle for which I do not have enough strength to solve.

I will try to explain to you my situation. I am in my 50s; mother of three children. My husband is Muslim. But we have a legal marriage, e.g. we do not have a religious marriage. My children believe in Christianity. My daughter is 13 years old, one of my sons is 23 and studies at Peterburg Technological Institute. Another one is 22 and is an officer in the Military School named after Alekseev in Moscow. My sons are seeking my permission to convert into their father’s religion. What should I do? I know that it is possible now, however

also know the ill treatment towards the foreigners here. The reason of their change is not the simple family disputes. Nor their material expectations or desire in elevating in higher ranks attracted them to this idea. They aim to help the tatar (Azeri-Turkish) people who are in dark condition now. Their religion prevents them to mix with their people. I am afraid to drag them to worse path with my opinion. I am alone with my grief... Ohhh... If I was able to write to you all my sorrows and worries... I am writing this letter with tears of a mother who madly loves their children. Now I am in a condition of lossing my sound reason and seeking your advise. You, only you, are able to hear how it will end with your understanding in this condition of our lives. My grief can seem very little and simple to you. But it is giving me terrible sufferings.

Lev Nikolayevich, you never neglected your valuable suggestions to the simple people like us. I knew it and that's why I dared to disturb you. Please, cast me into the fire of hope. I am so sorry to take your valuable time. My mad motherhood love forced me to take this step."

With whole heart,  
Elena YEFIMOVNA VEKILOVA  
Tiflis, Uchebniy Pereulok I, house 8

**“Islam has always been standing higher than the Christianity.”  
Tolstoy**

**Letter of Leo Tolstoy**

Tolstoy answered to the question by his letter written on March 15, 1909 in Yasnaya Polyana as follows:

“To Elena Efimovna,

It is impossible not to appreciate the desire of your sons to help the Tatar people to illuminate. In this case I am weak to explain all the importance of conversion into the religion of Muhammad. In general, I have to say to you that I think it is important to declare one's own religion to anybody without declaring it in front of the government. In this case, your sons do not need to declare their faith or give information about their preference to Islam over Christianity. May be, it is necessary. But I can say nothing in this regard. Therefore, it is your sons who must decide whether to give information to the authorities in this regard.

Regarding to your sons' preference to Islam over Christianity and specially, their generosity to fully submit themselves to their ideas, I join to them with my whole heart. May be it will seem strange saying these words by me who give preference to the original teachings of Christianity, but Islam by its appearance stands higher than Christianity, no doubt in it. If there is a choice between Christianity and Islam, then anybody with a sound reason will give preference to Islam with one God and its Prophet over Christianity which is full of complex theology of Trinity, baptism, prayers and various worships to Mary, mother of Jesus and saints and their images. It could not be possible vice versa.

Everything is developing and becoming perfect in the world. As every man develops, all humanity is on the path of being perfect. The essence of life of mankind is in their beliefs. The perfect nature of religion consists of making the religion easy to understand and explaining every anonymous opinions.

The great thinkers of mankind have always strived to explain the darkest points of religious virtues since the ancient times. First of all, they considered them the foundations of great religions. They were introduced in Vedas (Hinduism), and then in the teachings of Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tse, Jesus and Muhammad. It means all the founders of all religions brought the new understanding to the ancient religion and made it easier to understand and reasonable. They were human beings, so, they could not make the religion purified from the old understandings and mistakes.

If we consider that these people have not made mistakes, therefore, they included some unnecessary and strange views to make the religion acceptable by their followers who were below from the prophets' standings. As the result, it was difficult for mankind to see some reality. As much as you research the religions, it covers the face of reality, makes it dark by the changes of the theologians interpretations.

Regarding to these topics, in the most ancient religions there are many strange beliefs and every kind of superstitions and they cover the truth. And it is more evident in ancient religions such as Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity and Judaism as well and even very little, they also exist in the latest and greatest religion Islam. But Islam is more pure in this regard.

If religion Islam casts away all odds in it which is against its nature and returns to the religious-moral teachings of Muhammad, no doubt, it will unite with the foundations of all great religions, especially the foundations of Christian teachings which declare the truth. (\*)<sup>1</sup>

I am writing to you in details so that you will convey my message to your sons and these opinions can be useful to your sons in implementation their ideas. One of the most beautiful things man can do is to support the struggle to purify the essence of religion from the distorted things. If your children think this duty your family's duty, then their life will be whole and contemplated.

I do not know, you or your sons know what I know about Islam and the two recent teachings in Islam which claim to serve to purify the high truth from the faulty opinions and distortions?

Both groups has been searched and still are being searched. One of them is Bahaism emerged in Iran, then transferred to Turkey and try to establish there. Bahaism named after the son of Bahaullah who lived in Akka. However, this religious school which claims universal love as the one religion of all mankind does not accept any form of worship. (\*)<sup>2</sup>

The second one emerged in Kazan and the supporters name themselves as "The Army of God" or "Vaisovists" after the founder of the school. They see the essence of faith in love and avoid of everything that is against love. This theological school is being persecuted and its leaders have been arrested and are in jail.

If my opinions are useful a bit, I will be very delighted if you or your sons inform me with your latest decisions."

Lev TOLSTOY

It seems that Tolstoy got excited from the letter of a mother. It could be understood from his urgent and four paged letter. His words "Islam by its appearance stands higher than Christianity" put an end to the family suffering. The letter was accepted as a final decision. After the letter of Tolstoy, the Religious Office of Transcaucasus in Tiflis approved general Ibrahim Agha's sons faith Islam and they were given a certificate with the signature of Muftu Mirza Husain Efendi Qayipzade. The children's names were changed, Boris became Faris and Qleb became Qalib. The letter of Leo Tolstoy to Elenea vekilova was submitted to the museum of Tolstoy by faris in 1978 in Moscow. The letters have been exhibited in the museum.

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(\*) Because the main source of religions is God. Their teachings were to invite to have a faith in god and the doctrines God wanted to believe in. In this regard, as Tolstoy said, if religions were not distorted, then all of them would unite with the

(\*) Tolstoy disappointed with Bahai religion and criticized it as unsound religion. It is a religion founded by Mirza Husain Ali (1817-1892) who was named as Bahaullah by his followers and emerged in Iran. Mirza Husain Ali founded Bahai religion by declaring his teacher Bab Mirza Ali Muhammad who was killed in Tebriz in 1863 as the God's promised messenger by all religions. He was exiled to the different provinces of Ottoman empire after his declaring himself as the prophet and then he spread Bahai faith. After the death of Mirza Husain his son AbdulBaha (1844-1957) became a leader of the school. After AbdulBaha's death his eldest grandchild Sevki Efendi became a leader of Bahaism. In the beginning, Bahaism reminded a branch in Islam, but later on it became an independent religion. Bahaism includes many teachings of Christianity and Judaism. They pray three times in a day. They do not direct to Kaba when they pray even though they emerged as a branch of Islam. They direct towards the house of Bahaullah in their prayers. They have two sacred books: al-Itqan and Kitabu'l Aqdas. According to the decision number 1252 and 2345 in October 13, 1962 Bahaism was not accepted as a separate religion. Therefore, they do have right to build a separate worship house.



**“Muslims do not have any other gods but God and Muhammad is His messenger.”  
Tolstoy**

The faith of famous writer Tolstoy is not only being expressed in his letters to Vekilova. His close friends have always been discussing his sublime love to the religion of Islam and the personality of Muhammad (PBUH) and writing about it. His conversion into Islam is very evident in his following words:

Slovenian D.P. Makovitski was Tolstoy's personal doctor and compiled the dialogs of Tolstoy with his friends who visited him under the title “Being with Tolstoy in 1904-1910”.

This book has been published first time in Moscow in 1979 as “The Notes in Yasnaya Poliana” in four volumes. In the page 356 of the third volume Tolstoy's family discussions have been introduced. The reader once again becomes a witness of Tolstoy's sharing feelings of Ibrahim Agha Vekilov's wife and his love to the religion of Islam.

Tolstoy's doctor Dushan Petrovich Makovitski expressed this situation as follows:

On March 13, 1909, Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy said in one conversation that “I received a letter from one mother. She writes: “My husband is Muslim, but I am Christian. I have two sons, one is a student, the second one is an officer. Both want to convert into Islam.”

Upon Tolstoy's these words, Sofya Andreyevna (Tolstoy's friend) said: “Perhaps, her sons want to convert into Islam so that they could marry more than one wife.”

Tolstoy said: “So what... As if we have less people who practise not polygamy? When I thought over this letter matter became clear to me. Muhammad has always been standing higher than Christianity. He does not think man as god and never makes himself equal to God. Muslims do not have any other gods but God and Muhammad is His messenger. There is no any secret and doubt in it.”

Sofya Andreevna (Tolstoy's friend) asked: “Which one is better: Christianity or Islam?”

Tolstoy said: “For me, it is evident that Islam is better and higher.”

After a short silence, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy repeated: “If we compare Islam with Christianity, Islam stands higher. Islam illuminated me a lot...”

Mikhail Vasilevich (Tolstoy's friend) said: “Nekrasovs from Zaporozhy(\*)<sup>3</sup> have converted into Islam...”

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy said: “When humanity develops, the foundations of religion Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity too improve. The foundations of all these religions are one. When time passes, the unity and simplicity appear...”

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(\*) The Kazaks of Don who migrated to Turkey under the leadership of ataman Iqnat Nekrasov after the settling the Bulavin uprising.

## **Elena Vekilova, a Mother with a Grief**

After 80 years passed from the mailing between the famous writer Tolstoy and Elena, a mother with a grief, “Literaturnaya gazeta” spread news about the family letter of general Ibrahim Agha Vekilov in its 7th page (1991). It was completely devoted to the the sacred book Qur’an which compile all doctrines of the religion of Islam in itself. This attempt was a good start to give clear and not exaggerated information to thousands of Russian readers about Islam.

The newspaper gave several chapters from the writer Leo Tolstoy’s letter to Elena Vekilova and mentioned that: “We are sorry that we do not have any information about the identity of Elena Vekilova.”

There is only one person in Azerbaijan who can answer to that question: It is Professor Leyla daughter of Galib Vekilov. Vekilova who is a granddaughter of an officer family says:

“My grandmother Elena has met my grandad, a young officer Aghaoglu Ibrahim Vekilov in one of the military parties. Our family Vekilovs are from Kazakh, a border city of Azerbaijan. We belong to the noble family which continues more than 350 years. Our family gave to its people many famous warriors, scholars, writers and poets.

Two young people loved each other. But only their belonging to different religions has made an obstacle. Azerbaijanian Ibrahim Vekilov was Muslim, Yelena Efimovna was Orthodox Christian. By the laws of Russian Empire, for getting married one of the young couples needed to leave his or her religion. But either my grandad or my grandma did not gave up their religions. In this case, Ibrahim Agha Vekilov wrote a letter to Tsar. After struggles they got permission to marry. However, according to the laws again the children born in such families belonged to the Orthodox Christian religion. Therefore, Elena has baptized her three children, daughter Reyhan, sons Boris and Qleb. However, children under the impact of their fathers and relatives inclined to the religion of Islam and became Muslim after the suggestion of Tolstoy...” (\*)<sup>4</sup>

## **Tolstoy and Nakhshibendis**

On the day of Tolstoy’s 80 years birthday the Kazan-tatar newspapers and journals introduced many articles of the memories about Tolstoy. The famous writers of Tatars Abdullah Tukay, Fatih Amirhan, Fatih Karimli, etc., published articles about him. The newspapers such as “Fikir”, “Ideal”, “Vakit”, “El-Islah” and “Shura” introduced articles about Tolstoy’s philosophy and his place in the world literature. During this time many letters of tatar writers to Tolstoy were published in his newspapers.

Most interesting letter among them was the writer of “Iqtisad” Fatih Murtaza’s letter where he introduced five questions to Tolstoy. Tolstoy’s letter arrived on January 09, 1910 and the translation of this letter was published in the 11th issue of the newspaper “Iqtisad” (1910).

In this answer, Tolstoy wrote “Every religion is good. But it is human being who believes in religion should seek the meaning of life and love humanity” and displays the humanist approach to the question. However, the interesting point was that together with his letter he also has sent a treatise titled “A hadith for every day”. In this treatise, Tolstoy introduced Muhammad’s (PBUH) sayings and added: “This celestial sayings are appropriate

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(\*) Source: Shemistan Nezirli, Topographer General Ibrahim Vekilov, The State Library of Azerbaijan: Baku “Zaman” 2002. Registration number 71277 and 70823

for every kind of religious persons”(\*)<sup>5</sup>... In the letter published in the newspaper Tolstoy has confessed that he learned Islam from the Muslim missionaries because he did not know Arabic.

According to Prof. Dr. Elfine Sibghatullina, the missionaries Tolstoy wrote about belonged to the interesting Sufi organization which existed among Tatars (1860). Its founder Bahauddin Vaisov belonged to the Nakhshibendi branch of Sufism, but was enough open man to bring novelty to the Nakhshibendi branch according to the social demands of time... But he criticized the policy of Russian government in his letters which he sent to Tsar, so he was arrested and exiled.

According to Prof. Dr. Elfine Sibghatullina, Bahauddin Vaisov has met Tolstoy and shared their opinions in many topics. Even Tolstoy has agreed to abstain from the government and public life. (\*\*)

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(\*) Ravil Amirhanov, The Tataristan pre-Revolutionary Press (V Kontekste “Vostok-Zapad”), Kazan, Tataristan Publishing House, 2002: p. 141-142.

(\*\*) The History of Tatar Literature, vol. II, Kazan, Tataristan publishing house, 1985

**III CHAPTER**  
**CONFESSIONS OF TOLSTOY**  
**TO BELIEVE IN GOD**

I was baptized and brought up in the Orthodox Christian faith. I was taught it in childhood and throughout my childhood and youth. But when I abandoned the second course of the university at the age of eighteen I did not believe any of the things I had been taught any more. Judging by certain memories, I never seriously believed them, but had merely relied on what I was taught and on what was professed by the grown-up people around me, and that reliance was not very stable.

My lapse from faith occurred as is usual among people on our level of education. In most cases, I think, it happens as follows: a man lives like a people around him, on the basis of principles not merely having nothing in common with religious doctrine, but generally opposed to it; religious doctrine does not play an important role in life, in intercourse with others it is never encountered, and in a man's own life he never has to reckon with it. Religious doctrine is professed far away from life and independently of it. If it is encountered, it is only as an external phenomenon disconnected from life.

Then it was and is quite impossible to judge by a man's life and conduct. So that, religious doctrine, accepted on trust and supported by external pressure, fades away gradually under the influence of knowledge and experience of life which conflict with it, and a man very often lives on, imagining that he still holds connection the religious doctrine imparted to him in childhood whereas in fact its trace does not remain.

I think, it has been so and is with the great majority of people. I am speaking about people of our level in education who are sincere enough, and not of those who make the profession of faith as a means to attain worldly gains. (Such people are the most fundamental infidels, for if faith is for them a means to attain worldly aims, then certainly it is not faith.) these people of our education are so placed that the light of knowledge and life has caused an artificial erection to melt away, and they have either already noticed this and swept its place clear, or they have not yet noticed it.

Looking back on that time, I now see clearly that my only real faith that which apart from my animal instincts gave impulse to my life - was a belief to perfect myself. But in what this perfecting consisted and what its object was, I could not have said. I tried to perfect myself intellectually - I studied everything I could, anything life threw on my way in life; I tried to perfect my will, I set up rules which I tried to follow; I perfected myself physically, cultivating my strength and agility by all sorts of exercises, and accustoming myself to endurance and patience by all kinds of privations. And all this I considered to be the pursuit of perfection. The beginning was a moral perfection, indeed, but that was soon left itself to the desire to become perfect in general: by the desire to be better not in my own eyes or those of God but before other people. And very soon this effort again changed into a desire to be stronger than others: to be more famous, more important and richer than others.

So I lived; but five years ago something very strange happened to me. At first, I began to experience moments of perplexity and arrest of life, and though I did not know what to do or how to live; and I felt lost and became dejected. But this passed and I continued living as I did before. Then these moments of perplexity began to recur more often, and always in the same form. They were followed by these questions: What is it for? What does it lead to?

At first it seemed to me that these were aimless and irrelevant questions. I thought that it was all well known, and that if I should ever wish to deal with the solution it would not cost me much effort; I did not have time for it, but when I wanted, I should be able to find the answer. But the questions began to repeat themselves very frequently, and to demand replies insistently; and like drops of ink always falling on one place they ran together into one black blot.

Then occurred what happens to everyone sickening with a mortal internal disease. At first trivial signs of indisposition appear to which the sick man pays no attention; then these signs reappear more often and merge into uninterrupted period of suffering. The suffering increases, so that a mere indisposition becomes more important to him than anything else in the world, which is death!

My life became to be passive. I was able to breathe, eat, drink, and sleep, and I was not not help doing these things; but there was not a life, for there were not desires of fulfillment of which I could consider sound. If I wished something, I knew beforehand that whether I satisfied my desire or not, nothing would come out of it. If a miracle happened and had a fairy come and offered to fulfill my desires I should not have know what to ask. If in moments of intoxication I felt something which was a habit left by former wishes, in sober moments I knew this to be a delusion and that there was really nothing to wish for. I could not even wish to know the truth, for I guessed of what it consisted. The truth was about meaninglessness of life.

I had as it were lived, and walked, till I had come to a precipice and saw clearly that there was nothing before me but only a destruction. Nothing was to stop it. It was impossible to go back, and also it was impossible to close my eyes to avoid seeing that there was nothing ahead but only a suffering and real death which was a complete annihilation.

There is an Eastern narration about a traveller who was overtaken on a plain by an enraged beast. Escaping from the beast he gets into a dry well, but sees at the bottom of the well a dragon that has opened its jaws to swallow him. And the unfortunate man did not dare to climb out lest he should be destroyed by the beast, and did not dare to leap to the bottom of the well lest he should be eaten by the dragon, seizes a twig growing in a crack in the well and clings to it. His hands are growing weaker and he feels he will soon have to resign himself to the destruction that waits him above or below, but still he does on to cling. Then he sees two mice: one is black and another is white which go regularly round and round the stem of the twig to which he is clinging and gnaw at it. And soon the twig itself will snap and he will fall into the dragon's jaws. The traveller sees this and knows that he will inevitably perish; but while still hanging he looks around, sees some drops of honey on the leaves of the twig, tries to reach them with his tongue and licks them. So I too clung to the twig of life, knowing that the dragon of death was inevitably awaiting me, ready to tear me into pieces; and I could not understand why I had fallen into such torment. I tried to lick the honey which formerly

consoled me, but the honey no longer gave me pleasure, and the white and black mice of day and night gnawed at the branch by which I hung. I saw the dragon clearly and the honey no longer tasted sweet. I only saw the unescapable dragon and the mice, and I could not tear my gaze from them. and this is not a fable but the real unanswerable truth intelligible to all.

"Why do I live?" Answer: "In infinite space, in infinite time, infinitely small particles change their forms in infinite complexity, and when you have understood the laws of those mutations of form you will understand why you live on the earth."

Then in the sphere of abstract science I said to myself: "All humanity lives and develops on the basis of spiritual principles and ideals which guide them. Some ideals are expressed in religions, in sciences, in arts, in forms of government. Some ideals become more and more elevated, and humanity advances to its highest welfare. I am part of humanity, and therefore my vocation is to forward the recognition and the realization of the ideals of humanity." And at the time of my weak-mindedness I was satisfied with that; but as soon as the question of life presented itself clearly to me, those theories immediately crumbled away. Not to speak of the unscrupulous obscurity with which those sciences announce conclusions formed on the study of a small part of mankind as general conclusions; not to speak of the mutual contradictions of different adherents of this view as to what are the ideals of humanity; the strangeness, not to say stupidity, of the theory consists in the fact that in order to reply to the question facing each man: "What am I?" or "Why do I live?" or "What must I do?" one has first to decide the question: "What is the life of the whole?" (which is to him unknown and of which he is acquainted with one tiny part in one minute period of time. To understand what he is, one man must first understand all this mysterious humanity, consisting of people such as himself who do not understand one another.

Opening myself to the bright side of knowledge, I understood that I was only diverting my attention from the question. However, it was clear that those horizons opened out before me might be alluring and it might be to immerse oneself in the limitless expanse of those sciences, I already understood that the clearer they were the less they met my need and the less they applied to my question.

## **TO BE NOTHING**

Sakya Muni, a young, happy prince, from whom the existence of sickness, old age, and death had been hidden, went out to ride and saw an old man, toothless and slobbering. The prince, who did not know an old age which had been concealed from him, was amazed, and asked his rider what it was, and how that man had come to such a wretched and disgusting condition, and when he learnt that this was the common fate of all men, that the same thing inevitably was waiting him. The young prince who could not continue his drive, gave orders to go back so that he might reflect on reality. He shut himself up alone and reflected on life. He perhaps devised some consolation for himself. He again went out to ride, feeling happy. But this time he saw a sick man. He saw an emaciated, livid, trembling man with dim eyes. The prince, from whom sickness had been concealed, stopped and asked what this was. And when he learned that this was sickness, to which all men can catch, and even a healthy and happy prince might himself fall ill tomorrow. He again was in bad mood to enjoy and gave orders to

go back home, and again sought some solace, and perhaps found it. He drove out a third time for enjoyment. But this third time he saw another sight: he saw men carrying something. 'What is that?' 'A dead man.' 'What does "dead" mean?' asked the prince. He was told that to become dead means to become like that man. The prince approached the corpse, uncovered the shroud, and looked at it. 'What will happen to him now?' asked the prince. He was told that the corpse would be buried in the ground. 'Why?' 'Because he will certainly not return to life, and will only produce a stench and worms.' 'And is that the fate of all men? Will the same thing happen to me? Will they bury me, and shall I produce a stench and be eaten by worms?' 'Yes.' 'Home! I shall not drive out for pleasure, and never will so drive out again!'

And Sakya Muni could find no consolation in life, and decided that life is the greatest of evils; and he devoted all the strength of his soul to free himself from it, and to free others; and to do this so that, even after death, life shall not be renewed any more but be completely destroyed at its very roots. These are the direct replies that human wisdom gives when it replies to life's question.

"The life of the body is an evil and a lie. Therefore the destruction of the life of the body is a blessing, and we should desire it," says Socrates.

"Life is that which should not be - an evil; and the passage into Nothingness is the only good in life," says Schopenhauer.

"All that is in this world - folly and wisdom and riches and poverty and mirth and grief - is vanity and emptiness. Man dies and nothing is left of him. And that is foolishness," says Solomon.

"To life in the consciousness of the inevitability of suffering, of becoming enfeebled, of old age and of death, is impossible - we must free ourselves from life, from all possible life," says Buddha.

And what these strong minds said has been said and thought and felt by millions upon millions of people like them. And I have thought it and felt it as well.

So my wandering among the sciences, far from freeing me from my despair, only strengthened it. One kind of knowledge did not reply to life's question, the other kind replied directly confirming my despair, indicating not that the result at which I had arrived was the fruit of error or of a diseased state of my mind, but on the contrary that I had thought correctly, and that my thoughts coincided with the conclusions of the most powerful of human minds.

It is no good deceiving oneself. It is all - vanity! Happy is he who has not been born: death is better than life, and one must free oneself from life.

## **TO FIND THE ONE WHICH IS UNKNOWN**

Not finding an explanation in science I began to seek for it in life itself, hoping to find it among the people around me. And I began to observe how the people around me - people like myself - lived, and what their attitude was to this question which had brought me to despair.

And this is what I found among people who were in the same position as myself as regards education and manner of life.

I found that there were four ways out of the terrible position in which we are all placed for people of my circle.

The first was that of ignorance. It consists in not knowing, not understanding, that life is an evil and an absurdity.

The second way out is epicureanism. It consists, while knowing the hopelessness of life, in making use meanwhile of the advantages one has, disregarding the dragon and the mice, and licking the honey in the best way, especially if there is much of it within reach. That is the way in which the majority of people of our circle make life possible for themselves. Their circumstances furnish them with more of welfare than of hardship, and their moral dullness makes it possible for them to forget that the advantage of their position is accidental. So think and feel the majority of people of our day and our manner of life. The fact that some of these people declare the dullness of their thoughts and imaginations to be a philosophy, which they call Positive, does not remove them, in my opinion, from the ranks of those who, to avoid seeing the question and continue to lick the honey. I could not imitate these people; not having their dullness of imagination I could not artificially produce it in myself. I could not tear my eyes from the mice and the dragon, as no vital man can after he has once seen them.

The third escape is that of strength and energy. It consists in destroying life, when one has understood that it is an evil and an absurdity.

The fourth way out is weakness. It consists in encountering the truth of the situation and yet clinging to life, knowing in advance that nothing can come of it. People of this kind know that death is better than life, but not having the strength to act rationally - to end the deception quickly and kill themselves - they seem to wait for something. This is the escape of weakness, for if I know what is best and it is within my power, why not yield to what is best? ... I found myself in that category. So people of my class evade the terrible contradiction in four ways. Strain my attention as I would, I saw no way except those four. One way was not to understand that life is senseless, vanity, and an evil, and that it is better not to live. I could not help knowing this, and when I once knew it could not shut my eyes to it. The second way was to use life such as it is without thinking of the future. And I could not do that. I, like Sakya Muni, could not ride out hunting when I knew that old age, suffering, and death exist. My imagination was too vivid. Nor could I rejoice in the momentary accidents that for an instant threw pleasure to my lot. The third way, having understood that life is evil and stupid, was to end it by killing oneself. I understood that, but somehow still did not kill myself. The fourth way was to live like Solomon and Schopenhauer - knowing that life is a stupid joke played upon us, and still to go on living, washing oneself, dressing, dining, talking, and even writing books. This was to me repulsive and tormenting, but I remained in that position.



It was like this: I, my reason, have acknowledged that life is senseless. If there is nothing higher than reason (and there is not: nothing can prove that there is), then reason is the creator of life for me. If reason did not exist there would be no life for me. How can reason deny life when it is the creator of life? Or to ignore: were there no life, my reason would not exist; therefore reason is life's son. Life is everything. Reason is its fruit yet reason rejects life itself! I felt that there was something wrong here.

Life is a senseless evil, that is certain, said I to myself. Yet I have lived and am still living, and all mankind lived and lives. How is that? Why does it live, when it is possible not to live? Is it that only I and Schopenhauer are wise enough to understand the senselessness and evil of life?

The reasoning showing the vanity of life is not so difficult, and has long been familiar to the very simplest folk; yet they have lived and still live. How is it they all live and never think of doubting the reasonableness of life?

My knowledge, confirmed by the wisdom of the wise men, has shown me that everything on earth - organic and inorganic - is all most wisely arranged - only my own position is foolish and those fools who also include the enormous masses of people, know nothing about how everything in the world is arranged; but they live, and it seems to them that their life is very wisely arranged! ...

And it struck me: "But what if there is something I do not yet know? Ignorance acts just in that way. It always says what I am saying. When it does not know something, it says that what it does not know is foolish. Indeed, it appears that there is a whole humanity that lived and lives as if it understood the meaning of its life, for without understanding it could not live.

Indeed, from the most distant time of which I know anything, when life began, people have lived knowing the argument about the vanity of life which has shown me its senselessness, and yet they lived interpreting it by attributing some meaning to it.

Since the time when any life emerged among men they had that meaning of life, and they led that life which has descended to me. All that is in me and around me, all, corporeal and incorporeal, is the fruit of their knowledge of life. Those very instruments of thought with which I consider this life and condemn it were all devised not be me but by them. I myself was born, taught, and brought up thanks to them. They dug out the iron, taught us to cut down the forests, tamed the cows and horses, taught us to sow corn and to live together, organized our life, and taught me to think and speak. And I, their product, fed, supplied with drink, taught by them, thinking with their thoughts and words, have argued that they are an absurdity! "There is something wrong," said I to myself. "I have blundered somewhere." But it was a long time before I could find out where the mistake was.

All these doubts, which I am now able to express more or less systematically, I could not then have expressed. I then only felt that however logically inevitable were my conclusions concerning the vanity of life, confirmed as they were by the greatest thinkers, there was something not right about them. Whether it was in the reasoning itself or in the statement of the question I did not know - I only felt that the conclusion was rationally

convincing, but that that was insufficient. All these conclusions could not so convince me as to make me do what followed from my reasoning, that is to say, kill myself. And I should have told an untruth had I, without killing myself, said that reason had brought me to the point I had reached. Reason worked, but something else was also working which I can only call a consciousness of life. A force was working which forced me to pay my attention to this and not to that; and it was this force which extricated me from my desperate situation and directed my mind to another direction. This force forced me to pay my attention to the fact that I and a few hundred similar people are not the whole of mankind, and that I did not yet know the life of mankind.

Looking at the narrow circle of my equals, I saw only people who had not understood the question, or who had understood it and drowned it in life's intoxication, or had understood it and ended their lives, or had understood it and yet from weakness were living out their desperate life. And I saw no others. It seemed to me that that narrow circle of rich, learned, and leisured people to which I belonged formed the whole of humanity, and that those millions of others who have lived and are living were cattle of some sort - not real people.

### **TO UNITE WITH GOD**

Rational knowledge presented by the learned and wise, denies the meaning of life, but the enormous masses of men, the whole of mankind receive that meaning in irrational knowledge. And that irrational knowledge is faith, that very thing which I could not but reject. It is God, One in Three; the creation in six days; the devils and angels, and all the rest that I cannot accept as long as I retain my reason.

My position was terrible. I knew I could find nothing along the path of reasonable knowledge except a denial of life; and there - in faith - was nothing but a denial of reason, which was yet more impossible for me than a denial of life. From rational knowledge it appeared that life is an evil, people know this and it is in their power to end life; yet they lived and still live, and I myself live, though I have long known that life is senseless and an evil. By faith it appears that in order to understand the meaning of life I must renounce my reason, the very thing for which alone a meaning is required.

A contradiction arose from which there were two exits. Either that which I called reason was not so rational as I supposed, or that which seemed to me irrational was not so irrational as I supposed. And I began to verify the line of argument of my rational knowledge.

Verifying the line of argument of rational knowledge I found it quite correct. The conclusion that life is nothing was inevitable. The question was: "Why should I live, that is to say, what real, permanent result will come out of my illusory transitory life - what meaning has my finite existence in this infinite world?" And to reply to that question I had studied life.

The solution of all the possible questions of life could evidently not satisfy me, for my question, simple as it at first appeared, included a demand for an explanation of the finite in terms of the infinite, and vice versa.

I asked: "What is the meaning of my life, beyond time, cause, and space?" And I replied to quite another question: "What is the meaning of my life within time, cause, and space?" With the result that, after long efforts of thought, the answer I reached was: "None."

In my reasoning, I constantly compared (I could not do otherwise) the finite with the finite, and the infinite with the infinite; but for that reason I reached the inevitable result: force is force, matter is matter, will is will, the infinite is the infinite, nothing is nothing - and that was all that could result.

In whatever way I stated the question, that relation appeared in the answer. How am I to live? - According to the law of God. What real result will come of my life? - Eternal torment or eternal bliss. What meaning has life that death does not destroy? - Union with the eternal God: heaven.

So that besides rational knowledge, which had seemed to me the only knowledge, I was inevitably brought to acknowledge that all live humanity has another irrational knowledge - faith which makes it possible to live. Faith still remained to me as irrational as it was before, but I could not but admit that it alone gives mankind a reply to the questions of life, and that consequently it makes life possible. Reasonable knowledge had brought me to acknowledge that life is senseless - my life had come to a halt and I wished to destroy myself. Looking around on the whole of mankind I saw that people live and declare that they know the meaning of life. I looked at myself - I had lived as long as I knew a meaning of life and had made life possible.

Looking again at people of other lands, at my contemporaries and at their predecessors, I saw the same thing. Where there is life, there since man began faith has made life possible for him, and the chief outline of that faith is everywhere and always identical.

### **IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND GOD**

Whatever the faith may be, and whatever answers it may give, and to whomsoever it gives them, every such answer gives to the finite existence of man an infinite meaning, a meaning not destroyed by sufferings, deprivations, or death. This means that only in faith can we find for life a meaning and a possibility. What, then, is this faith? And I understood that faith is not merely "the evidence of things not seen", etc., and is not a revelation (that defines only one of the indications of faith, is not the relation of man to God (one has first to define faith and then God, and not define faith through God); it not only agreement with what has been told one (as faith is most usually supposed to be), but faith is a knowledge of the meaning of human life in consequence of which man does not destroy himself but lives. Faith is the strength of life. If a man lives he believes in something. If he did not believe that one must live for something, he would not live. If he does not see and recognize the illusory nature of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he understands the illusory nature of the finite, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith he cannot live.

And I recalled the whole course of my mental labour and was horrified. It was now clear to me that for man to be able to live he must either not see the infinite, or have such an

explanation of the meaning of life as will connect the finite with the infinite. Such an explanation I had had; but as long as I believed in the finite I did not need the explanation, and I began to verify it by reason. And in the light of reason the whole of my former explanation flew to atoms. But a time came when I ceased to believe in the finite. And then I began to build up on rational foundations, out of what I knew, an explanation which would give a meaning to life; but nothing could I build. Together with the best human intellects I reached the result that  $0$  equals  $0$ , and was much astonished at that conclusion, though nothing else could have resulted.

What was I doing when I sought an answer in the experimental sciences? I wished to know why I live, and for this purpose studied all that is outside me. Evidently I might learn much, but nothing of what I needed.

What was I doing when I sought an answer in philosophical knowledge? I was studying the thoughts of those who had found themselves in the same position as I, lacking a reply to the question "why do I live?" Evidently I could learn nothing but what I knew myself, namely that nothing can be known.

What am I? - A part of the infinite. The whole problem lies in those few words.

Is it possible that humanity only asks that question since yesterday? And can no one before me have set himself that question - a question so simple, and one that springs to the tongue of every wise child?

Surely that question has been asked since man began; and naturally for the solution of that question since man began it has been equally insufficient to compare the finite with the finite and the infinite with the infinite, and since man began the relation of the finite to the infinite has been sought out and expressed.

All these conceptions in which the finite has been adjusted to the infinite and a meaning found for life - the conception of God, of will, of goodness - we submit to logical examination. And all those conceptions fail to stand reason's criticism.

Were it not so terrible it would be ludicrous with what pride and self-satisfaction we, like children, pull the watch to pieces, take out the spring, make a toy of it, and are then surprised that the watch does not go.

A solution to the contradiction between the finite and the infinite, and such a reply to the question of life as will make it possible to live, is necessary and precious. And that is the only solution which we find everywhere, always, and among all peoples: a solution descending from times in which we lose sight of the life of man, a solution so difficult that we can compose nothing like it - and this solution we light-heartedly destroy in order again to set the same question, which is natural to everyone and to which we have no answer.

The conception of an infinite god, the divinity of the soul, the connexion of human affairs with God, the unity and existence of the soul, man's conception of moral goodness and evil - are conceptions formulated in the hidden infinity of human thought, they are those

conceptions without which neither life nor I should exist; yet rejecting all that labour of the whole of humanity, I wished to remake it afresh myself and in my own manner.

I did not then think like that, but the germs of these thoughts were already in me. I understood, in the first place, that my position with Schopenhauer and Solomon, notwithstanding our wisdom, was stupid: we see that life is an evil and yet continue to live. That is evidently stupid, for if life is senseless and I am so fond of what is reasonable, it should be destroyed, and then there would be no one to challenge it. Secondly, I understood that all one's reasonings turned in a vicious circle like a wheel out of gear with its pinion. However much and however well we may reason we cannot obtain a reply to the question; and o will always equal o, and therefore our path is probably erroneous. Thirdly, I began to understand that in the replies given by faith is stored up the deepest human wisdom and that I had no right to deny them on the ground of reason, and that those answers are the only ones which reply to life's question. I understood this, but it made matters no better for me.

### **I COULD NOT EMBRACE CHRISTIANITY**

I was now ready to accept any faith if only it did not demand of me a direct denial of reason - which would be a falsehood. And I studied Buddhism and Mohammedanism from books, and most of all I studied Christianity both from books and from the people around me.

Naturally I first of all turned to the orthodox of my circle, to people who were learned: to Church theologians, monks, to theologians of the newest shade, and even to Evangelicals who profess salvation by belief in the Redemption. And I seized on these believers and questioned them as to their beliefs and their understanding of the meaning of life.

But though I made all possible concessions, and avoided all disputes, I could not accept the faith of these people. I saw that what they gave out as their faith did not explain the meaning of life but obscured it, and that they themselves affirm their belief not to answer that question of life which brought me to faith, but for some other aims alien to me.

I remember the painful feeling of fear of being thrown back into my former state of despair, after the hope I often and often experienced in my intercourse with these people.

The more fully they explained to me their doctrines, the more clearly did I perceive their error and realized that my hope of finding in their belief an explanation of the meaning of life was vain.

It was not that in their doctrines they mixed many unnecessary and unreasonable things with the Christian truths that had always been close to me: that was not what repelled me. I was repelled by the fact that these people's lives were like my own, with only one difference - that such a life did not correspond to the principles they preached in their teachings. I clearly felt that they betrayed themselves and that they, like myself did not find any other meaning in life than to live while life lasts, taking all one's hands can seize. I saw this because if they had a meaning which destroyed the fear of loss, suffering, and death, they would not have feared these things. But they, these believers of our circle, just like myself,

living in sufficiency and superfluity, tried to increase or preserve them, feared privations, suffering, and death, and just like myself and all of us unbelievers, lived to satisfy their desires, and lived just as badly, if not worse, than the unbelievers.

No arguments could convince me of the truth of their faith. Only deeds which showed that they saw a meaning in life making what was so dreadful to me - poverty, sickness, and death which were not dreadful to them, could convince me. And such deeds I did not see among the various believers in our circle. On the contrary, I saw such deeds done by people of our circle who were the most unbelievers, but never by the so-called believers.

And I understood that the belief of these people was not the faith I sought, and that their faith is not a real faith but an epicurean consolation in life.

I understood that that faith may serve, if not for a consolation at least for some distraction for a repentant on his death-bed, but it cannot serve for the majority of people, who are called on not to amuse themselves while consuming the labour of others but to create life.

For all humanity to be able to live, and continue to live attributing a meaning to life, they, those milliards, must have a different, a real, knowledge of faith.

I perceived that to understand the meaning of life it is necessary first that life should not be meaningless and evil, then we can apply reason to explain it. I understood why I had so long wandered round so evident a truth, and that if one is to think and speak of the life of mankind, one must think and speak of that life and not of the life of some of life's parasites. That truth was always as true as that two and two are four, but I had not acknowledged it, because on admitting two and two to be four I had also to admit that I was bad; and to feel myself to be good was for me more important and necessary than for two and two to be four. I came to love good people, hated myself, and confessed the truth. Now all became clear to me.

What if an executioner passing his whole life in torturing people and cutting off their heads, or a hopeless drunkard, or a madman settled for life in a dark room which he has fouled and imagines that he would perish if he left - what if he asked himself: "What is life?" Evidently he could not other reply to that question than that life is the greatest evil, and the madman's answer would be perfectly correct, but only as applied to himself. What if I am such a madman? What if all we rich and leisured people are such madmen? and I understood that we really are such madmen. I at any rate was certainly such.

And indeed a bird is so made that it must fly, collect food, and build a nest, and when I see that a bird does this I have pleasure in its joy. A goat, a hare, and a wolf are so made that they must feed themselves, and must breed and feed their family, and when they do so I feel firmly assured that they are happy and that their life is a reasonable one. then what should a man do? He too should produce his living as the animals do, but with this difference, that he will perish if he does it alone; he must obtain it not for himself but for all. And when he does that, I have a firm assurance that he is happy and that his life is reasonable. But what had I done during the whole thirty years of my responsible life? Far from producing sustenance for all, I did not even produce it for myself. I lived as a parasite, and on asking myself, what is the use of my life? I got the reply: "No use." If the meaning of human life lies in supporting it, how could I - who for thirty years had been engaged not on supporting life but on destroying

it in myself and in others - how could I obtain any other answer than that my life was senseless and an evil? ... It was both senseless and evil.

The life of the world endures by someone's will - by the life of the whole world and by our lives someone fulfills his purpose. To hope to understand the meaning of that will one must first perform it by doing what is wanted of us. But if I will not do what is wanted of me, I shall never understand what is wanted of me, and still less what is wanted of us all and of the whole world.

If a naked, hungry beggar has been taken from the cross-roads, brought into a building belonging to a beautiful establishment, fed, supplied with drink, and obliged to move a handle up and down, evidently, before discussing why he was taken, why he should move the handle, and whether the whole establishment is reasonably arranged - the beggar should first of all move the handle. If he moves the handle he will understand that it works a pump, that the pump draws water and that the water irrigates the garden beds; then he will be taken from the pumping station to another place where he will gather fruits and will enter into the joy of his master, and, passing from lower to higher work, will understand more and more of the arrangements of the establishment, and taking part in it will never think of asking why he is there, and will certainly not reproach the master.

So those who do his will, the simple, unlearned working folk, whom we regard as cattle, do not reproach the master; but we, the wise, eat the master's food but do not do what the master wishes, and instead of doing it sit in a circle and discuss: "Why should that handle be moved? Isn't it stupid?" So we have decided. We have decided that the master is stupid, or does not exist, and that we are wise, only we feel that we are quite useless and that we must somehow do away with ourselves.

## **SEARCH FOR GOD**

The consciousness of the error in reasonable knowledge helped me to free myself from the temptation of idle ratiocination. the conviction that knowledge of truth can only be found by living led me to doubt the rightness of my life; but I was saved only by the fact that I was able to tear myself from my exclusiveness and to see the real life of the plain working people, and to understand that it alone is real life. I understood that if I wish to understand life and its meaning, I must not live the life of a parasite, but must live a real life, and - taking the meaning given to live by real humanity and merging myself in that life - verify it.

During that time this is what happened to me. During that whole year, when I was asking myself almost every moment whether I should not end matters with a noose or a bullet - all that time, together with the course of thought and observation about which I have spoken, my heart was oppressed with a painful feeling, which I can only describe as a search for God.

I say that that search for God was not reasoning, but a feeling, because that search continued not from the course of my thoughts. It was directly contrary to them - but happened from the heart. It was a feeling of fear, orphanage, isolation in a strange land, and a hope of getting help from someone.

Though I was quite convinced of the impossibility of proving the existence of a Deity (Kant had shown, and I quite understood him, that it could not be proved), I yet sought for god, hoped I should find Him, and from old habit addressed prayers to that which I sought but had not found Him. I went over in my mind the arguments of Kant and Schopenhauer displaying the impossibility of proving the existence of a God, and I began to believe in those arguments and to refute them. I said to myself that cause is not a category of thought such as are Time and Space. If I exist, there must be some cause for it, and a cause of causes. And that first cause of all is what men have called "God". And I paused on that thought, and tried with all my being to recognize the presence of that cause. And as soon as I acknowledged that there is a force in whose power I am, I at once felt that I could live. But I asked myself: What is that cause, that force? How am I to think of it? What are my relations to that which I call "God"? And only the familiar replies occurred to me: "He is the Creator and Preserver." This reply did not satisfy me, and I felt I was losing within me what I needed for my life. I became terrified and began to pray to Him whom I sought, that He should help me. But the more I prayed the more apparent it became to me that He did not hear me, and that there was no one to whom to address myself. And with despair in my heart that there is no God at all, I said: "Lord, have mercy, save me! Lord, teach me!" But no one had mercy on me, and I felt that my life was coming to freeze.

But again and again, from various sides, I returned to the same conclusion that I did not have come into the world without any cause or meaning; I could not be such a fledgling fallen from its nest as I felt myself to be. Or, granting that I be such, lying on my back crying in the high grass, even then I cry because I know that a mother has borne me within her, has hatched me, warmed me, fed me, and loved me. Where is she - that mother? If I have been deserted, who has deserted me? I cannot hide from myself that someone bore me, loved me. Who was that someone? Again "God".

### **I DID NOT COME TO THIS WORLD WITHOUT PURPOSE**

He knows and sees my searching, my despair, and my struggle.

I said to myself: "He exists." And I had only for an instant to admit that, and at once life blossomed within me, and I felt the possibility and happiness of being. But again, from the admission of the existence of a God I went on to seek my relation with God; and again I imagined "that" God - our Creator in Three Persons who sent His Son, the Saviour - and again "that" God, away from the world and from me, melted like an ice, melted before my eyes, and again nothing left, and again the spring of life dried up within me, and I despaired and felt that I hadve only to suicide. And the worst of all was, that I felt I could not do it.

Not twice or three times, but tens and hundreds of times, I reached the moments of first of joy and animation, and then of despair and consciousness of the impossibility of living.

I remember that it was early spring: I was alone in the forest listening to sounds. I listened and thought of the same thing which I thought during those last three years. I was seeking God.



I said to myself: "Very well, there is no God,"; "there is no one who is not my illusion but a reality like my whole life. He does not exist, and miracles cannot prove His existence, because the miracles would be my imagination and are irrational.

But I asked myself: "My "perception" of God, of Him whom I seek, where has that come from?" And again at this thought the heralds of life rose before me. All that was around me became alive and conceived a meaning. However, my happiness did not last long. My mind continued to question.

I said to myself : "The conception of God is not God. The conception is what takes place within me. The conception of God is something I can evoke or can refrain from evoking in myself. That is not what I seek. I seek for such a thing without which there can be no life." And again all around me and within me began to die, and again I wanted to kill myself.

But then I turned my inner sight on myself, on what went on within me, and I remembered all those cessations of life and reanimations that recurred within me hundreds of times. I recalled moments when I only lived if I believed in God. As it was before, so it was now; I need only the awareness of God to survive; if I forgot Him, or disbelieved Him, I would die.

What is this animation and dying? I do not live when I lose belief in the existence of God. I should long ago have killed myself had I not had a dim hope of finding Him. I live, really live, only when I feel Him and seek Him. "What more do you seek?" exclaimed a voice within me. "This is He. He is that without which one cannot live. To know God and to live is one and the same thing. God is life."

"Live seeking God, and then you will not live without God." And more than ever before, all within me and around me illuminated, and the infinite light did not again abandon me.

And I was saved from suicide. When and how this change occurred I could not say. Gradually the force of life in me had been destroyed and I had reached the impossibility of living, a cessation of life and the necessity of suicide, so imperceptibly and gradually did that force of life return to me. And strange to say the strength of life which returned to me was not new, but quite old - the same that had borne me along in my earliest days.

I returned to what belonged to my earliest childhood and youth. I went back to the belief in that Will which created me and desires something of me. I went back to the belief that the chief and only aim of my life is to be better, which was to live in accord with that Will and I went back to the belief that I could find an expression of that Will in what humanity, in the distant past hidden from, has produced for its guidance: that is to say, I returned to a belief in God, in moral perfection, and in a tradition which transmitted the meaning of life. There was only one difference, that then all this was accepted unconsciously, while now I knew that without it I could not live.

What happened to me was something like this: I was put into a boat (I do not remember when) and pushed off from an unknown shore, shown the direction of the opposite shore, had oars put into my unexperienced hands, and was alone. I screamed as much as I

was able and moved forward; but the further I advanced towards the middle of the stream the more rapid grew the current bearing me away and the more often I encountered others, like myself, borne away by the stream. There were a few people who rowed, there were others who had stopped rowing; there were large boats full of people. They struggled against the current, and some others yielded to it. And the further I went the more, seeing the progress down the current of all those who were adrift, I forgot the direction. In the centre of the stream, amid the crowd of boats and vessels which were being borne down stream, I quite lost my direction and stopped my screaming. Around me on all sides, with mirth and rejoicing, people who rowed were borne down the stream; assured me and each other that no other direction was possible. And I believed them and floated with them. I was carried so far that I heard the roar of the rapids in which I must be shattered, and I saw boats shattered in them. And I tried to gain my confidence. I was not able to understand what had happened to me. I saw before me everything destructed. There was no safety anywhere and I did not know what to do; but, looking back, I perceived many boats which unceasingly pushed across the stream, and I remembered about the shore, the oars, and the direction, and began to pull back upwards against the stream and towards the shore.

That shore was God; that direction was tradition; the oars were the freedom which was given me for pulling for the shore and unite with God. And so the force of life was renewed in me and I continued to live.