

MY RELIGION

by Leo Tolstoy

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Chapter 7 Why is it that men have not done as Jesus commanded them, and thus secured the greatest happiness within their reach, the happiness they have always longed for and still desire? The reply to this inquiry is always the same, although expressed in different ways. The doctrine of Jesus (we are told) is admirable, and it is true that if we practised it, we should see the kingdom of God established upon earth; but to practise it is difficult, and consequently this doctrine is impracticable. The doctrine of Jesus, which teaches men how they should live, is admirable, is divine; it brings true happiness, but it is difficult to practise. We repeat this, and hear it repeated so many, many times, that we do not observe the contradiction contained in these words. It is natural to each human being to do what seems to him best. Any doctrine teaching men how they should live instructs them only as to what is best for each. If we show men what they have to do to attain what is best for each, how can they say that they would like to do it, but that it is impossible of attainment? According to the law of their nature they cannot do what is worse for each, and yet they declare that they cannot do what is best. The reasonable activity of man, from his earliest existence, has been applied to the search for what is best among the contradictions that envelop human life. Men struggled for the soil, for objects which are necessary to them; then they

arrived at the division of goods, and called this property; finding that this arrangement, although difficult to establish, was best, they maintained ownership. Men fought with one another for the possession of women, they abandoned their children; then they found it was best that each should have his own family; and although it was difficult to sustain a family, they maintained the family, as they did ownership and many other things. As soon as they discover that a thing is best, however difficult of attainment, men do it. What, then, is the meaning of the saying that the doctrine of Jesus is admirable, that a life according to the doctrine of Jesus would be better than the life which men now lead, but that men cannot lead this better life because it is difficult? If the word "difficult," used in this way, is to be understood in the sense that it is difficult to renounce the fleeting satisfaction of sensual desires that we may obtain a greater good, why do we not say that it is difficult to labor for bread, difficult to plant a tree that we may enjoy the fruit? Every being endowed with even the most rudimentary reason knows that he must endure difficulties to procure any good, superior to that which he has enjoyed before. And yet we say that the doctrine of Jesus is admirable, but impossible of practice, because it is difficult! Now it is difficult, because in following it we are obliged to deprive ourselves of many things that we have hitherto enjoyed. Have we never heard that it is far more to our advantage to endure difficulties and privations than to satisfy all our desires? Man may fall to the level of the beasts, but he ought not to make use of his reason to devise an apology for his bestiality. From the moment that he begins to reason, he is conscious of being endowed with reason, and this consciousness stimulates him to distinguish between the reasonable and the unreasonable. Reason does not proscribe; it enlightens. Suppose that I am shut into a dark room, and in searching for the door I continually bruise myself against the walls.

Some one brings me a light, and I see the door. I ought no longer to bruise myself when I see the door; much less ought I to affirm that, although it is best to go out through the door, it is difficult to do so, and that, consequently, I prefer to bruise myself against the walls. In this marvellous argument that the doctrine of Jesus is admirable, and that its practice would give the world true happiness, but that men are weak and sinful, that they would do the best and do the worst, and so cannot do the best—in this strange plea there is an evident misapprehension; there is something else besides defective reasoning; there is also a chimerical idea. Only a chimerical idea, mistaking reality for what does not exist, and taking the non-existent for reality, could lead men to deny the possibility of practising that which by their own avowal would be for their true welfare. The chimerical idea which has reduced men to this condition is that of the dogmatic Christian religion, as it is taught through the various catechisms, to all who profess the Christianity of the Church. This religion, according to the definition of it given by its followers, consists in accepting as real that which does not exist—these are Paul's words, and they are repeated in all the theologies and catechisms as the best definition of faith. It is this faith in the reality of what does not exist that leads men to make the strange affirmation that the doctrine of Jesus is excellent for all men, but is worth nothing as a guide to their way of living. Here is an exact summary of what this religion teaches:— A personal God, who is from all eternity—one of three persons—decided to create a world of spirits. This God of goodness created the world of spirits for their own happiness, but it so happened that one of the spirits became spontaneously wicked. Time passed, and God created a material world, created man for man's own happiness, created man happy, immortal, and without sin. The felicity of man consisted in the enjoyment of life without toil; his immortality was due to the promise that

this life should last forever; his innocence was due to the fact that he had no conception of evil. Man was beguiled in paradise by one of the spirits of the first creation, who had become spontaneously wicked. From this dates the fall of man, who engendered other men fallen like himself, and from this time men have endured toil, sickness, suffering, death, the physical and moral struggle for existence; that is to say, the fantastic being preceding the fall became real, as we know him to be, as we have no right or reason to imagine him not to be. The state of man who toils, who suffers, who chooses what is for his own welfare and rejects what would be injurious to him, who dies—this state, which is the real and only conceivable state, is not, according to the doctrine of this religion, the normal state of man, but a state which is unnatural and temporary. Although this state, according to the doctrine, has lasted for all humanity since the expulsion of Adam from paradise, that is, from the commencement of the world until the birth of Jesus, and has continued since the birth of Jesus under exactly the same conditions, the faithful are asked to believe that this is an abnormal and temporary state. According to this doctrine, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who was himself God, was sent by God into the world in the garb of humanity to rescue men from this temporary and abnormal state; to deliver them from the pains with which they had been stricken by this same God because of Adam's sin; and to restore them to their former normal state of felicity—that is to immortality, innocence, and idleness. The second person of the Trinity (according to this doctrine), by suffering death at the hands of man, atoned for Adam's sin, and put an end to that abnormal state which had lasted from the commencement of the world. And from that time onward, the men who have had faith in Jesus have returned to the state of the first man in paradise; that is, have become immortal, innocent, and idle. The doctrine does not concern itself too closely with

the practical result of the redemption, in virtue of which the earth after Jesus' coming ought to have become once more, at least for believers, everywhere fertile, without need of human toil; sickness ought to have ceased, and mothers have borne children without pain;—since it is difficult to assure even believers who are worn by excessive labor and broken down by suffering, that toil is light, and suffering easy to endure. But that portion of the doctrine which proclaims the abrogation of death and of sin, is affirmed with redoubled emphasis. It is asserted that the dead continue to live. And as the dead cannot bear witness that they are dead or prove that they are living (just as a stone is unable to affirm either that it can or cannot speak), this absence of denial is admitted as proof, and it is affirmed that dead men are not dead. It is affirmed with still more solemnity and assurance that, since the coming of Jesus, the man who has faith in him is free from sin; that is, that since the coming of Jesus, it is no longer necessary that man should guide his life by reason, and choose what is best for himself. He has only to believe that Jesus has redeemed his sins and he then becomes infallible, that is, perfect. According to this doctrine, men ought to believe that reason is powerless, and that for this cause they are without sin, that is, cannot err. A faithful believer ought to be convinced that since the coming of Jesus, the earth brings forth without labor, that childbirth no longer entails suffering, that diseases no longer exist, and that death and sin, that is, error, are destroyed; in a word, that what is, is not, and what is not, is. Such is the rigorously logical theory of Christian theology. This doctrine, by itself, seems to be innocent. But deviations from truth are never inoffensive, and the significance of their consequences is in proportion to the importance of the subject to which these errors are applied. And here the subject at issue is the whole life of man. What this doctrine calls the true life, is a life of personal happiness, without sin, and eternal; that is,

a life that no one has ever known, and which does not exist. But the life that is, the only life that we know, the life that we live and that all humanity lives and has lived, is, according to this doctrine, a degraded and evil existence, a mere phantasmagoria of the happy life which is our due. Of the struggle between animal instincts and reason, which is the essence of human life, this doctrine takes no account. The struggle that Adam underwent in paradise, in deciding whether to eat or not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, is, according to this doctrine, no longer within the range of human experience. The question was decided, once for all, by Adam in paradise. Adam sinned for all; in other words, he did wrong, and all men are irretrievably degraded; and all our efforts to live by reason are vain and even impious. This I ought to know, for I am irreparably bad. My salvation does not depend upon living by the light of reason, and, after distinguishing between good and evil, choosing the good; no, Adam, once for all, sinned for me, and Jesus, once for all, has atoned for the wrong committed by Adam; and so I ought, as a looker-on, to mourn over the fall of Adam and rejoice at the redemption through Jesus. All the love for truth and goodness in the heart of man, all his efforts to illuminate his spiritual life by the light of reason, are not only of slight importance, according to this doctrine; they are a temptation, an incitement to pride. Life as it is upon this earth, with all its joys and its splendors, its struggles of reason with darkness—the life of all men that have lived before me, my own life with its inner struggles and triumphs—all this is not the true life; it is the fallen life, a life irretrievably bad. The true life, the life without sin, is only in faith, that is, in imagination, that is, in lunacy. Let any one break the habit contracted from infancy of believing in all this; let him look boldly at this doctrine as it is; let him endeavor to put himself in the position of a man without prejudice, educated independently of this doctrine—and then let him ask himself if this doctrine would not

appear to such a man as a product of absolute insanity. However strange and shocking all this might appear to me, I was obliged to examine into it, for here alone I found the explanation of the objection, so devoid of logic and common-sense, that I heard everywhere with regard to the impossibility of practising the doctrine of Jesus: It is admirable, and would give true happiness to men, but men are not able to obey it. Only a conviction that reality does not exist, and that the non-existent is real, could lead men to this surprising contradiction. And this false conviction I found in the pseudo-Christian religion which men had been teaching for fifteen hundred years. The objection that the doctrine of Jesus is excellent but impracticable, comes not only from believers, but from sceptics, from those who do not believe, or think that they do not believe, in the dogmas of the fall of man and the redemption; from men of science and philosophers who consider themselves free from all prejudice. They believe, or imagine that they believe, in nothing, and so consider themselves as above such a superstition as the dogma of the fall and the redemption. At first it seemed to me that all such persons had serious motives for denying the possibility of practising the doctrine of Jesus. But when I came to look into the source of their negation, I was convinced that the sceptics, in common with the believers, have a false conception of life; to them life is not what it is, but what they imagine it ought to be—and this conception rests upon the same foundation as does that of the believers. It is true that the sceptics, who pretend to believe in nothing, believe not in God, or in Jesus, or in Adam; but they believe in a fundamental idea which is at the basis of their misconception—in the rights of man to a life of happiness—much more firmly than do the theologians. In vain do science and philosophy pose as the arbiters of the human mind, of which they are in fact only the servants. Religion has provided a conception of life, and science travels in the beaten path. Religion reveals the

meaning of life, and science only applies this meaning to the course of circumstances. And so, if religion falsifies the meaning of human life, science, which builds upon the same foundation, can only make manifest the same fantastic ideas. According to the doctrine of the Church, men have a right to happiness, and this happiness is not the result of their own efforts, but of external causes. This conception has become the base of science and philosophy. Religion, science, and public opinion all unite in telling us that the life we now live is bad, and at the same time they affirm that the doctrine which teaches us how we can succeed in ameliorating life by becoming better, is an impracticable doctrine. Religion says that the doctrine of Jesus, which provides a reasonable method for the improvement of life by our own efforts, is impracticable because Adam fell and the world was plunged into sin. Philosophy says that the doctrine of Jesus is impracticable because human life is developed according to laws that are independent of the human will. In other words, the conclusions of science and philosophy are exactly the same as the conclusion reached by religion in the dogmas of original sin and the redemption. There are two leading theses at the basis of the doctrine of the redemption: (1) the normal life of man is a life of happiness, but our life on earth is one of misery, and it can never be bettered by our own efforts; (2) our salvation is in faith, which enables us to escape from this life of misery. These two theses are the source of the religious conceptions of the believers and sceptics who make up our pseudo-Christian societies. The second thesis gave birth to the Church and its organization; from the first is derived the received tenets of public opinion and our political and philosophical theories. The germ of all political and philosophical theories that seek to justify the existing order of things—such as Hegelianism and its offshoots—is in this second thesis. Pessimism, which demands of life what it cannot give and then denies its

value, has also its origin in the same dogmatic proposition. Materialism, with its strange and enthusiastic affirmation that man is the product of natural forces and nothing more, is the legitimate result of the doctrine that teaches that life on earth is a degraded existence. Spiritism, with its learned adherents, is the best proof we have that the conclusions of philosophy and science are based upon the religious doctrine of that eternal happiness which should be the natural heritage of man. This false conception of life has had a deplorable influence upon all reasonable human activity. The dogma of the fall and the redemption has debarred man from the most important and legitimate field for the exercise of his powers, and has deprived him entirely of the idea that he can of himself do anything to make his life happier or better. Science and philosophy, proudly believing themselves hostile to pseudo-Christianity, only carry out its decrees. Science and philosophy concern themselves with everything except the theory that man can do anything to make himself better or happier. Ethical and moral instruction have disappeared from our pseudo-Christian society without leaving a trace. Believers and sceptics who concern themselves so little with the problem how to live, how to make use of the reason with which we are endowed, ask why our earthly life is not what they imagine it ought to be, and when it will become what they wish. This singular phenomenon is due to the false doctrine which has penetrated into the very marrow of humanity. The effects of the knowledge of good and evil, which man so unhappily acquired in paradise, do not seem to have been very lasting; for, neglecting the truth that life is only a solution of the contradictions between animal instincts and reason, he stolidly refrains from applying his reason to the discovery of the historical laws that govern his animal nature. Excepting the philosophical doctrines of the pseudo-Christian world, all the philosophical and religious doctrines of which we have knowledge—Judaism, the

doctrine of Confucius, Buddhism, Brahmanism, the wisdom of the Greeks—all aim to regulate human life, and to enlighten men with regard to what they must do to improve their condition. The doctrine of Confucius teaches the perfecting of the individual; Judaism, personal fidelity to an alliance with God; Buddhism, how to escape from a life governed by animal instincts; Socrates taught the perfecting of the individual through reason; the Stoics recognized the independence of reason as the sole basis of the true life. The reasonable activity of man has always been—it could not be otherwise—to light by the torch of reason his progress toward beatitude. Philosophy tells us that free-will is an illusion, and then boasts of the boldness of such a declaration. Free-will is not only an illusion; it is an empty word invented by theologians and experts in criminal law; to refute it would be to undertake a battle with a wind-mill. But reason, which illuminates our life and impels us to modify our actions, is not an illusion, and its authority can never be denied. To obey reason in the pursuit of good is the substance of the teachings of all the masters of humanity, and it is the substance of the doctrine of Jesus; it is reason itself, and we cannot deny reason by the use of reason. Making use of the phrase “son of man,” Jesus teaches that all men have a common impulse toward good and toward reason, which leads to good. It is superfluous to attempt to prove that “son of man” means “Son of God.” To understand by the words “son of man” anything different from what they signify is to assume that Jesus, to say what he wished to say, intentionally made use of words which have an entirely different meaning. But even if, as the Church says, “son of man” means “Son of God,” the phrase “son of man” applies none the less to man, for Jesus himself called all men “the sons of God.” The doctrine of the “son of man” finds its most complete expression in the interview with Nicodemus. Every man, Jesus says, aside from his consciousness of his material,

individual life and of his birth in the flesh, has also a consciousness of a spiritual birth (John 3: 5, 6, 7), of an inner liberty, of something within; this comes from on high, from the infinite that we call God (John 3: 14-17); now it is this inner consciousness born of God, the son of God in man, that we must possess and nourish if we would possess true life. The son of man is homogeneous (of the same race) with God. Whoever lifts up within himself this son of God, whoever identifies his life with the spiritual life, will not deviate from the true way. Men wander from the way because they do not believe in this light which is within them, the light of which John speaks when he says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Jesus tells us to lift up the son of man, who is the son of God, for a light to all men. When we have lifted up the son of man, we shall then know that we can do nothing without his guidance (John 8: 28). Asked, "Who is this son of man?" Jesus answers:— "Yet a little while is the light in you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." (John 12: 35.) The son of man is the light in every man that ought to illuminate his life. "Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness," is Jesus' warning to the multitude (Luke 11: 35). In all the different ages of humanity we find the same thought, that man is the receptacle of the divine light descended from heaven, and that this light is reason, which alone should be the object of our worship, since it alone can show the way to true well-being. This has been said by the Brahmins, by the Hebrew prophets, by Confucius, by Socrates, by Marcus Aurelius, by Epictetus, and by all the true sages—not by compilers of philosophical theories, but by men who sought goodness for themselves and for others. And yet we declare, in accordance with the dogma of the redemption, that it is entirely superfluous to think of the light that is in us, and that we ought not to speak of it at all! We must, say the

believers, study the three persons of the Trinity; we must know the nature of each of these persons, and what sacraments we ought or ought not to perform, for our salvation depends, not on our own efforts, but on the Trinity and the regular performance of the sacraments. We must, say the sceptics, know the laws by which this infinitesimal particle of matter was evolved in infinite space and infinite time; but it is absurd to believe that by reason alone we can secure true well-being, because the amelioration of man's condition does not depend upon man himself, but upon the laws that we are trying to discover. I firmly believe that, a few centuries hence, the history of what we call the scientific activity of this age will be a prolific subject for the hilarity and pity of future generations. For a number of centuries, they will say, the scholars of the western portion of a great continent were the victims of epidemic insanity; they imagined themselves to be the possessors of a life of eternal beatitude, and they busied themselves with divers lucubrations in which they sought to determine in what way this life could be realized, without doing anything themselves, or even concerning themselves with what they ought to do to ameliorate the life which they already had. And what to the future historian will seem much more melancholy, it will be found that this group of men had once had a master who had taught them a number of simple and clear rules, pointing out what they must do to render their lives happy—and that the words of this master had been construed by some to mean that he would come on a cloud to re-organize human society, and by others as admirable doctrine, but impracticable, since human life was not what they conceived it to be, and consequently was not worthy of consideration; as to human reason, it must concern itself with the study of the laws of an imaginary existence, without concerning itself about the welfare of the individual man. The Church says that the doctrine of Jesus cannot be

literally practised here on earth, because this earthly life is naturally evil, since it is only a shadow of the true life. The best way of living is to scorn this earthly existence, to be guided by faith (that is, by imagination) in a happy and eternal life to come, and to continue to live a bad life here and to pray to the good God. Philosophy, science, and public opinion all say that the doctrine of Jesus is not applicable to human life as it now is, because the life of man does not depend upon the light of reason, but upon general laws; hence it is useless to try to live absolutely conformable to reason; we must live as we can with the firm conviction that according to the laws of historical and sociological progress, after having lived very imperfectly for a very long time, we shall suddenly find that our lives have become very good. People come to a farm; they find there all that is necessary to sustain life—a house well furnished, barns filled with grain, cellars and store-rooms well stocked with provisions, implements of husbandry, horses and cattle—in a word, all that is needed for a life of comfort and ease. Each wishes to profit by this abundance, but each for himself, without thinking of others, or of those who may come after him. Each wants the whole for himself, and begins to seize upon all that he can possibly grasp. Then begins a veritable pillage; they fight for the possession of the spoils; oxen and sheep are slaughtered; wagons and other implements are broken up into firewood; they fight for the milk and grain; they grasp more than they can consume. No one is able to sit down to the tranquil enjoyment of what he has, lest another take away the spoils already secured, to surrender them in turn to some one stronger. All these people leave the farm, bruised and famished. Thereupon the Master puts everything to rights, and arranges matters so that one may live there in peace. The farm is again a treasury of abundance. Then comes another group of seekers, and the same struggle and tumult is repeated, till these in their turn go away bruised

and angry, cursing the Master for providing so little and so ill. The good Master is not discouraged; he again provides for all that is needed to sustain life—and the same incidents are repeated over and over again. Finally, among those who come to the farm, is one who says to his companions: “Comrades, how foolish we are! see how abundantly everything is supplied, how well everything is arranged! There is enough here for us and for those who will come after us; let us act in a reasonable manner. Instead of robbing each other, let us help one another. Let us work, plant, care for the dumb animals, and every one will be satisfied.” Some of the company understand what this wise person says; they cease from fighting and from robbing one another, and begin to work. But others, who have not heard the words of the wise man, or who distrust him, continue their former pillage of the Master’s goods. This condition of things lasts for a long time. Those who have followed the counsels of the wise man say to those about them: “Cease from fighting, cease from wasting the Master’s goods; you will be better off for doing so; follow the wise man’s advice.” Nevertheless, a great many do not hear and will not believe, and matters go on very much as they did before. All this is natural, and will continue as long as people do not believe the wise man’s words. But, we are told, a time will come when every one on the farm will listen to and understand the words of the wise man, and will realize that God spoke through his lips, and that the wise man was himself none other than God in person; and all will have faith in his words. Meanwhile, instead of living according to the advice of the wise man, each struggles for his own, and they slay each other without pity, saying, “The struggle for existence is inevitable; we cannot do otherwise.” What does it all mean? Even the beasts graze in the fields without interfering with each other’s needs, and men, after having learned the conditions of the true life, and after being convinced that God himself has shown them

how to live the true life, follow still their evil ways, saying that it is impossible to live otherwise. What should we think of the people at the farm if, after having heard the words of the wise man, they had continued to live as before, snatching the bread from each other's mouths, fighting, and trying to grasp everything, to their own loss? We should say that they had misunderstood the wise man's words, and imagined things to be different from what they really were. The wise man said to them, "Your life here is bad; amend your ways, and it will become good." And they imagined that the wise man had condemned their life on the farm, and had promised them another and a better life somewhere else. They decided that the farm was only a temporary dwelling-place, and that it was not worth while to try to live well there; the important thing was not to be cheated out of the other life promised them elsewhere. This is the only way in which we can explain the strange conduct of the people on the farm, of whom some believed that the wise man was God, and others that he was a man of wisdom, but all continued to live as before in defiance of the wise man's words. They understood everything but the one significant truth in the wise man's teachings—that they must work out for themselves their own peace and happiness there on the farm, which they took for a temporary abode thinking all the time of the better life they were to possess elsewhere. Here is the origin of the strange declaration that the precepts of the wise man were admirable, even divine, but that they were difficult to practise. Oh, if men would only cease from evil ways while waiting for the Christ to come in his chariot of fire to their aid; if they would only cease to invoke the law of the differentiation or integration of forces, or any historical law whatever! None will come to their aid if they do not aid themselves. And to aid ourselves to a better life, we need expect nothing from heaven or from earth; we need only to cease from ways that result in our own loss.

Chapter 8 If it be admitted that the doctrine of Jesus is perfectly reasonable, and that it alone can give to men true happiness, what would be the condition of a single follower of that doctrine in the midst of a world that did not practise it at all? If all men would decide at the same time to obey, its practice would then be possible. But one man alone cannot act in defiance of the whole world; and so we hear continually this plea: "If, among men who do not practise the doctrine of Jesus, I alone obey it; if I give away all that I possess; if I turn the other cheek; if I refuse to take an oath or to go to war, I should find myself in profound isolation; if I did not die of hunger, I should be beaten; if I survived that, I should be cast into prison; I should be shot, and all the happiness of my life—my life itself—would be sacrificed in vain." This plea is founded upon the doctrine of *quid pro quo*, which is the basis of all arguments against the possibility of practising the doctrine of Jesus. It is the current objection, and I sympathized with it in common with all the rest of the world, until I finally broke entirely away from the dogmas of the Church which prevented me from understanding the true significance of the doctrine of Jesus. Jesus prepared his doctrine as a means of salvation from the life of perdition organized by men contrary to his precepts; and I declared that I should be very glad to follow this doctrine if it were not for fear of this very perdition. Jesus offered me the true remedy against a life of perdition, and I clung to the life of perdition! from which it was plain that I did not consider this life as a life of perdition, but as something good, something real. The conviction that my personal, worldly life was something real and good constituted the misunderstanding, the obstacle, that prevented me from comprehending Jesus' doctrine. Jesus knew the disposition of men to regard their personal, worldly life as real and good, and so, in a series of apothegms and parables, he taught them that they had no right to life, and that they were given life only that they

might assure themselves of the true life by renouncing their worldly and fantastic organization of existence. To understand what is meant by "saving" one's life, according to the doctrine of Jesus, we must first understand what the prophets, what Solomon, what Buddha, what all the wise men of the world have said about the personal life of man. But, as Pascal says, we cannot endure to think upon this theme, and so we carry always before us a screen to conceal the abyss of death, toward which we are constantly moving. It suffices to reflect on the isolation of the personal life of man, to be convinced that this life, in so far as it is personal, is not only of no account to each separately, but that it is a cruel jest to heart and reason. To understand the doctrine of Jesus, we must, before all, return to ourselves, reflect soberly, undergo the [Greek word] of which John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, speaks, when addressing himself to men of clouded judgment. "Repent" (such was his preaching); "repent, have another mind, or you shall all perish. The axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Death and perdition await each one of you. Be warned, turn back, repent." And Jesus declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." When Jesus was told of the death of the Galileans massacred by Pilate, he said:— "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you. Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13: 1-5.) If he had lived in our day, in Russia, he would have said: "Think you that those who perished in the circus at Berditchef or on the slopes of Koukouyef were sinners above all others? I tell you, No; but you, if you do not repent, if you do not arouse yourselves, if you do not find in your life that which is imperishable, you also shall perish. You are horrified by the

death of those crushed by the tower, burned in the circus; but your death, equally as frightful and as inevitable, is here, before you. You are wrong to conceal it or to forget it; unlocked for, it is only more hideous." To the people of his own time he said:— "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" (Luke 12: 54-57.) We know how to interpret the signs of the weather; why, then, do we not see what is before us? It is in vain that we fly from danger, and guard our material life by all imaginable means; in spite of all, death is before us, if not in one way, then in another; if not by massacre, or the falling of a tower, then in our beds, amidst much greater suffering. Make a simple calculation, as those do who undertake any worldly project, any enterprise whatever, such as the construction of a house, or the purchase of an estate, such as those make who labor with the hope of seeing their calculations realized. "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" (Luke 14: 28-31.) Is it not the act of a madman to labor at what, under any circumstances, one can never finish? Death will always come before the edifice of worldly prosperity can be completed. And if we knew beforehand that, however we may struggle with death, it is not we, but death, that will triumph; is it not an indication that we

ought not to struggle with death, or to set our hearts upon that which will surely perish, but to seek to perform the task whose results cannot be destroyed by our inevitable departure? “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: How much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (Luke 12: 22-27.) Whatever pains we may take for our nourishment, for the care of the body, we cannot prolong life by a single hour. Is it not folly to trouble ourselves about a thing that we cannot possibly accomplish? We know perfectly well that our material life will end with death, and we give ourselves up to evil to procure riches. Life cannot be measured by what we possess; if we think so, we only delude ourselves. Jesus tells us that the meaning of life does not lie in what we possess or in what we can accumulate, but in something entirely different. He says:— “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods lead up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:

16-21.) Death threatens us every moment; Jesus says:—
“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching; ...And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”
(Luke 12: 35-40.) The parable of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom, that of the consummation of the age and the last judgment, as the commentators all agree, are designed to teach that death awaits us at every moment. Death awaits us at every moment. Life is passed in sight of death. If we labor for ourselves alone, for our personal future, we know that what awaits us in the future is death. And death will destroy all the fruits of our labor. Consequently, a life for self can have no meaning. The reasonable life is different; it has another aim than the poor desires of a single individual. The reasonable life consists in living in such a way that life cannot be destroyed by death. We are troubled about many things, but only one thing is necessary. From the moment of his birth, man is menaced by an inevitable peril, that is, by a life deprived of meaning, and a wretched death, if he does not discover the thing essential to the true life. Now it is precisely this one thing which insures the true life that Jesus reveals to men. He invents nothing, he promises nothing through divine power; side by side with this personal life, which is a delusion, he simply reveals to men the truth. In the parable of the husbandmen (Matthew 11: 33-42), Jesus explains the cause of that blindness in men which conceals the truth from

them, and which impels them to take the apparent for the real, their personal life for the true life. Certain men, having leased a vineyard, imagined that they were its masters. And this delusion leads them into a series of foolish and cruel actions, which ends in their exile. So each one of us imagines that life is his personal property, and that he has a right to enjoy it in such a way as may seem to him good, without recognizing any obligation to others. And the inevitable consequence of this delusion is a series of foolish and cruel actions followed by exclusion from life. And as the husbandmen killed the servants and at last the son of the householder, thinking that the more cruel they were, the better able they would be to gain their ends, so we imagine that we shall obtain the greatest security by means of violence. Expulsion, the inevitable sentence visited upon the husbandmen for having taken to themselves the fruits of the vineyard, awaits also all men who imagine that the personal life is the true life. Death expels them from life; they are replaced by others, as a consequence of the error which led them to misconceive the meaning of life. As the husbandmen forgot, or did not wish to remember, that they had received a vineyard already hedged about and provided with winepress and tower, that some one had labored for them and expected them to labor in their turn for others;—so the men who would live for themselves forget, or do not wish to remember, all that has been done for them during their life; they forget that they are under an obligation to labor in their turn, and that all the blessings of life which they enjoy are fruits that they ought to divide with others. This new manner of looking at life, this [Greek word], or repentance, is the corner-stone of the doctrine of Jesus. According to this doctrine, men ought to understand and feel that they are insolvent, as the husbandmen should have understood and felt that they were insolvent to the householder, unable to pay the debt contracted by generations past, present,

and to come, with the overruling power. They ought to feel that every hour of their existence is only a mortgage upon this debt, and that every man who, by a selfish life, rejects this obligation, separates himself from the principle of life, and so forfeits life. Each one should remember that in striving to save his own life, his personal life, he loses the true life, as Jesus so many times said. The true life is the life which adds something to the store of happiness accumulated by past generations, which increases this heritage in the present, and hands it down to the future. To take part in this true life, man should renounce his personal will for the will of the Father, who gives this life to man. In John 8: 35, we read:— “And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the son abideth forever.” That is, only the son who observes the will of the father shall have eternal life. Now, the will of the Father of Life is not the personal, selfish life, but the filial life of the son of man; and so a man saves his life when he considers it as a pledge, as something confided to him by the Father for the profit of all, as something with which to live the life of the son of man. A man, about to travel into a far country, called his servants together and divided among them his goods. Although receiving no precise instructions as to the manner in which they were to use these goods, some of the servants understood that the goods still belonged to the master, and that they ought to employ them for the master’s gain. And the servants who had labored for the good of the master were rewarded, while the others, who had not so labored, were despoiled even of what they had received. (Matthew 15: 14-46.) The life of the son of man has been given to all men, and they know not why. Some of them understand that life is not for their personal use, but that they must use it for the good of the son of man; others, feigning not to understand the true object of life, refuse to labor for the son of man; and those that labor for the true life will be united with the source of life; those that do not

so labor, will lose the life they already have. Jesus tells us in what the service of the son of man consists and what will be the recompense of that service. The son of man, endowed with kingly authority, will call upon the faithful to inherit the true life; they have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed and consoled the wretched, and in so doing they have ministered to the son of man, who is the same in all men; they have not lived the personal life, but the life of the son of man, and they are given the life eternal. According to all the Gospels, the object of Jesus' teaching was the life eternal. And, strange as it may seem, Jesus, who is supposed to have been raised in person, and to have promised a general resurrection—Jesus not only said nothing in affirmation of individual resurrection and individual immortality beyond the grave, but on the contrary, every time that he met with this superstition (introduced at this period into the Talmud, and of which there is not a trace in the records of the Hebrew prophets), he did not fail to deny its truth. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were constantly discussing the subject of the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, in angels, and in spirits (Acts 23: 8), but the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, or angel, or spirit. We do not know the source of the difference in belief, but it is certain that it was one of the polemical subjects among the secondary questions of the Hebraic doctrine that were constantly under discussion in the Synagogues. And Jesus not only did not recognize the resurrection, but denied it every time he met with the idea. When the Sadducees demanded of Jesus, supposing that he believed with the Pharisees in the resurrection, to which of the seven brethren the woman should belong, he refuted with clearness and precision the idea of individual resurrection, saying that on this subject they erred, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Those who are worthy of resurrection, he said, will remain

like the angels of heaven (Mark 12: 21-24); and with regard to the dead:— “Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye, therefore, do greatly err.” (Mark 12: 26, 27.) Jesus’ meaning was that the dead are living in God. God said to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.” To God, all those who have lived the life of the son of man, are living. Jesus affirmed only this, that whoever lives in God, will be united to God; and he admitted no other idea of the resurrection. As to personal resurrection, strange as it may appear to those who have never carefully studied the Gospels for themselves, Jesus said nothing about it whatever. If, as the theologians teach, the foundation of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus, is it not strange that Jesus, knowing of his own resurrection, knowing that in this consisted the principal dogma of faith in him—is it not strange that Jesus did not speak of the matter at least once, in clear and precise terms? Now, according to the canonical Gospels, he not only did not speak of it in clear and precise terms; he did not speak of it at all, not once, not a single word. The doctrine of Jesus consisted in the elevation of the son of man, that is, in the recognition on the part of man, that he, man, was the son of God. In his own individuality Jesus personified the man who has recognized the filial relation with God. He asked his disciples whom men said that he was—the son of man? His disciples replied that some took him for John the Baptist, and some for Elijah. Then came the question, “But whom say ye that I am?” And Peter answered, “Thou art the Messiah, the son of the living God.” Jesus responded, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;” meaning that Peter understood, not through faith in human explanations, but because, feeling himself to be the son of

God, he understood that Jesus was also the son of God. And after having explained to Peter that the true faith is founded upon the perception of the filial relation to God, Jesus charged his other disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Messiah. After this, Jesus told them that although he might suffer many things and be put to death, he, that is his doctrine, would be triumphantly re-established. And these words are interpreted as a prophecy of the resurrection (Matthew 16: 13-21). Of the thirteen passages which are interpreted as prophecies of Jesus in regard to his own resurrection, two refer to Jonah in the whale's belly, another to the rebuilding of the temple. The others affirm that the son of man shall not be destroyed; but there is not a word about the resurrection of Jesus. In none of these passages is the word "resurrection" found in the original text. Ask any one who is ignorant of theological interpretations, but who knows Greek, to translate them, and he will never agree with the received versions. In the original we find two different words, [this word] and [that word, in Greek], which are rendered in the sense of resurrection; one of these words means to "re-establish"; the other means "to awaken, to rise up, to arouse one's self." But neither the one nor the other can ever, in any case, mean to "resuscitate"—to raise from the dead. With regard to these Greek words and the corresponding Hebrew word, qum, we have only to examine the scriptural passages where these words are employed, as they are very frequently, to see that in no case is the meaning "to resuscitate" admissible. The word voskresnovit, auferstehn, resusciter—"to resuscitate"—did not exist in the Greek or Hebrew tongues, for the reason that the conception corresponding to this word did not exist. To express the idea of resurrection in Greek or in Hebrew, it is necessary to employ a periphrasis, meaning, "is arisen, has awakened among the dead." Thus, in the Gospel of Matthew where reference is made to Herod's belief that John the Baptist

had been resuscitated, we read, [this phrase], “has awakened among the dead.” In the same manner, in Luke, at the close of the parable of Lazarus, where it said that if men believe not the prophets, they would not believe even though one be resuscitated, we find the periphrasis, [this phrase in Greek] “if one arose among the dead.” But, if in these passages the words “among the dead” were not added to the words “arose or awakened,” the last two could never signify resuscitation. When Jesus spoke of himself, he did not once use the words “among the dead” in any of the passages quoted in support of the affirmation that Jesus foretold his own resurrection. Our conception of the resurrection is so entirely foreign to any idea that the Hebrews possessed with regard to life, that we cannot even imagine how Jesus would have been able to talk to them of the resurrection, and of an eternal, individual life, which should be the lot of every man. The idea of a future eternal life comes neither from Jewish doctrine nor from the doctrine of Jesus, but from an entirely different source. We are obliged to believe that belief in a future life is a primitive and crude conception based upon a confused idea of the resemblance between death and sleep—an idea common to all savage races. The Hebraic doctrine (and much more the Christian doctrine) was far above this conception. But we are so convinced of the elevated character of this superstition, that we use it as a proof of the superiority of our doctrine to that of the Chinese or the Hindus, who do not believe in it at all. Not the theologians only, but the free-thinkers, the learned historians of religions, such as Tiele, and Max Müller, make use of the same argument. In their classification of religions, they give the first place to those which recognize the superstition of the resurrection, and declare them to be far superior to those not professing that belief. Schopenhauer boldly denounced the Hebraic religion as the most despicable of all religions because it contains not a trace of

this belief. Not only the idea itself, but all means of expressing it, were wanting to the Hebraic religion. Eternal life is in Hebrew hayail eolam. By olam is meant the infinite, that which is permanent in the limits of time; olam also means "world" or "cosmos." Universal life, and much more hayai leolam, "eternal life," is, according to the Jewish doctrine, the attribute of God alone. God is the God of life, the living God. Man, according to the Hebraic idea, is always mortal. God alone is always living. In the Pentateuch, the expression "eternal life" is twice met with; once in Deuteronomy and once in Genesis. God is represented as saying:—

See now that I, even I, am he And there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal: And there is none that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, And say, As I live forever.
(Deuteronomy 32: 39, 40.)

"And Jehovah said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also the tree of life, and live forever." (Genesis 3: 22.) These two sole instances of the use of the expression "eternal life" in the Old Testament (with the exception of another instance in the apocryphal book of Daniel) determine clearly the Hebraic conception of the life of man and the life eternal. Life itself, according to the Hebrews, is eternal, is in God; but man is always mortal: it is his nature to be so. According to the Jewish doctrine, man as man, is mortal. He has life only as it passes from one generation to another, and is so perpetuated in a race. According to the Jewish doctrine, the faculty of life exists in the people. When God said, "Ye may live, and not die," he addressed these words to the people. The life that God breathed into man is mortal for each separate human being; this life is perpetuated from generation to generation, if men fulfil the

union with God, that is, obey the conditions imposed by God. After having propounded the Law, and having told them that this Law was to be found not in heaven, but in their own hearts, Moses said to the people:— “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Eternal, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, that thou mayest live.... I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed: to love the Eternal, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.” (Deuteronomy 30: 15-19.) The principal difference between our conception of human life and that possessed by the Jews is, that while we believe that our mortal life, transmitted from generation to generation, is not the true life, but a fallen life, a life temporarily depraved—the Jews, on the contrary, believed this life to be the true and supreme good, given to man on condition that he obey the will of God. From our point of view, the transmission of the fallen life from generation to generation is the transmission of a curse; from the Jewish point of view, it is the supreme good to which man can attain, on condition that he accomplish the will of God. It is precisely upon the Hebraic conception of life that Jesus founded his doctrine of the true or eternal life, which he contrasted with the personal and mortal life. Jesus said to the Jews:— “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5: 39.) To the young man who asked what he must do to have eternal life, Jesus said in reply, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” He did not say “the eternal life,” but simply “the life” (Matthew 19: 17). To the same question propounded by the scribe, the answer was, “This do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10: 28), once more promising life, but saying nothing of eternal life. From these two instances, we

know what Jesus meant by eternal life; whenever he made use of the phrase in speaking to the Jews, he employed it in exactly the same sense in which it was expressed in their own law—the accomplishment of the will of God. In contrast with the life that is temporary, isolated, and personal, Jesus taught of the eternal life promised by God to Israel—with this difference, that while the Jews believed the eternal life was to be perpetuated solely by their chosen people, and that whoever wished to possess this life must follow the exceptional laws given by God to Israel—the doctrine of Jesus holds that the eternal life is perpetuated in the son of man, and that to obtain it we must practise the commandments of Jesus, who summed up the will of God for all humanity. As opposed to the personal life, Jesus taught us, not of a life beyond the grave, but of that universal life which comprises within itself the life of humanity, past, present, and to come. According to the Jewish doctrine, the personal life could be saved from death only by accomplishing the will of God as propounded in the Mosaic law. On this condition only the life of the Jewish race would not perish, but would pass from generation to generation of the chosen people of God. According to the doctrine of Jesus, the personal life is saved from death by the accomplishment of the will of God as propounded in the commandments of Jesus. On this condition alone the personal life does not perish, but becomes eternal and immutable, in union with the son of man. The difference is, that while the religion given by Moses was that of a people for a national God, the religion of Jesus is the expression of the aspirations of all humanity. The perpetuity of life in the posterity of a people is doubtful, because the people itself may disappear, and perpetuity depends upon a posterity in the flesh. Perpetuity of life, according to the doctrine of Jesus, is indubitable, because life, according to his doctrine, is an attribute of all humanity in the son of man who lives in harmony with the will of God. If we believe that

Jesus' words concerning the last judgment and the consummation of the age, and other words reported in the Gospel of John, are a promise of a life beyond the grave for the souls of men—if we believe this, it is none the less true that his teachings in regard to the light of life and the kingdom of God have the same meaning for us that they had for his hearers eighteen centuries ago; that is, that the only real life is the life of the son of man conformable to the will of the Giver of Life. It is easier to admit this than to admit that the doctrine of the true life, conformable to the will of the Giver of Life, contains the promise of the immortality of life beyond the grave. Perhaps it is right to think that man, after this terrestrial life passed in the satisfaction of personal desires, will enter upon the possession of an eternal personal life in paradise, there to taste all imaginable enjoyments; but to believe that this is so, to endeavor to persuade ourselves that for our good actions we shall be recompensed with eternal felicity, and for our bad actions punished with eternal torments—to believe this, does not aid us in understanding the doctrine of Jesus, but, on the contrary, takes away the principal foundation of that doctrine. The entire doctrine of Jesus inculcates renunciation of the personal, imaginary life, and a merging of this personal life in the universal life of humanity, in the life of the son of man. Now the doctrine of the individual immortality of the soul does not impel us to renounce the personal life; on the contrary, it affirms the continuance of individuality forever. The Jews, the Chinese, the Hindus, all men who do not believe in the dogma of the fall and the redemption, conceive of life as it is. A man lives, is united with a woman, engenders children, cares for them, grows old, and dies. His life continues in his children, and so passes on from one generation to another, like everything else in the world—stones, metals, earth, plants, animals, stars. Life is life, and we must make the best of it. To live for self alone, for the animal life, is not reasonable.

And so men, from their earliest existence, have sought for some reason for living aside from the gratification of their own desires; they live for their children, for their families, for their nation, for humanity, for all that does not die with the personal life. But according to the doctrine of the Church, human life, the supreme good that we possess, is but a very small portion of another life of which we are deprived for a season. Our life is not the life that God intended to give us or such as is our due. Our life is degenerate and fallen, a mere fragment, a mockery, compared with the real life to which we think ourselves entitled. The principal object of life is not to try to live this mortal life conformably to the will of the Giver of Life; or to render it eternal in the generations, as the Hebrews believed; or to identify ourselves with the will of God, as Jesus taught; no, it is to believe that after this unreal life the true life will begin. Jesus did not speak of the imaginary life that we believe to be our due, and that God did not give to us for some unexplained reason. The theory of the fall of Adam, of eternal life in paradise, of an immortal soul breathed by God into Adam, was unknown to Jesus; he never spoke of it, never made the slightest allusion to its existence. Jesus spoke of life as it is, as it must be for all men; we speak of an imaginary life that has never existed. How, then, can we understand the doctrine of Jesus? Jesus did not anticipate such a singular change of view in his disciples. He supposed that all men understood that the destruction of the personal life is inevitable, and he revealed to them an imperishable life. He offers true peace to them that suffer; but to those who believe that they are certain to possess more than Jesus gives, his doctrine can be of no value. How shall I persuade a man to toil in return for food and clothing if this man is persuaded that he already possesses great riches? Evidently he will pay no attention to my exhortations. So it is with regard to the doctrine of Jesus. Why should I toil for bread when I can be

rich without labor? Why should I trouble myself to live this life according to the will of God when I am sure of a personal life for all eternity? That Jesus Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, as God made manifest in the flesh, was the salvation of men; that he took upon himself the penalty for the sin of Adam and the sins of all men; that he atoned to the first person of the Trinity for the sins of humanity; that he instituted the Church and the sacraments for our salvation—believing this, we are saved, and shall enter into the possession of personal, eternal life beyond the grave. But meanwhile we cannot deny that he has saved and still saves men by revealing to them their inevitable loss, showing them that he is the way, the truth, and the life, the true way to life instead of the false way to the personal life that men had heretofore followed. If there are any who doubt the life beyond the grave and salvation based upon redemption, no one can doubt the salvation of all men, and of each individual man, if they will accept the evidence of the destruction of the personal life, and follow the true way to safety by bringing their personal wills into harmony with the will of God. Let each man endowed with reason ask himself, What is life? and What is death? and let him try to give to life and death any other meaning than that revealed by Jesus, and he will find that any attempt to find in life a meaning not based upon the renunciation of self, the service of humanity, of the son of man, is utterly futile. It cannot be doubted that the personal life is condemned to destruction, and that a life conformable to the will of God alone gives the possibility of salvation. It is not much in comparison with the sublime belief in the future life! It is not much, but it is sure. I am lost with my companions in a snow-storm. One of them assures me with the utmost sincerity that he sees a light in the distance, but it is only a mirage which deceives us both; we strive to reach this light, but we never can find it. Another resolutely brushes away the snow; he seeks and finds the road, and he

cries to us, "Go not that way, the light you see is false, you will wander to destruction; here is the road, I feel it beneath my feet; we are saved." It is very little, we say. We had faith in that light that gleamed in our deluded eyes, that told us of a refuge, a warm shelter, rest, deliverance—and now in exchange for it we have nothing but the road. Ah, but if we continue to travel toward the imaginary light, we shall perish; if we follow the road, we shall surely arrive at a haven of safety. What, then, must I do if I alone understand the doctrine of Jesus, and I alone have trust in it among a people who neither understand it nor obey it? What ought I to do, to live like the rest of the world, or to live according to the doctrine of Jesus? I understood the doctrine of Jesus as expressed in his commandments, and I believed that the practice of these commandments would bring happiness to me and to all men. I understood that the fulfilment of these commandments is the will of God, the source of life. More than this, I saw that I should die like a brute after a farcical existence if I did not fulfil the will of God, and that the only chance of salvation lay in the fulfilment of His will. In following the example of the world about me, I should unquestionably act contrary to the welfare of all men, and, above all, contrary to the will of the Giver of Life; I should surely forfeit the sole possibility of bettering my desperate condition. In following the doctrine of Jesus, I should continue the work common to all men who had lived before me; I should contribute to the welfare of my fellows, and of those who were to live after me; I should obey the command of the Giver of Life; I should seize upon the only hope of salvation. The circus at Berditchef is in flames. A crowd of people are struggling before the only place of exit—a door that opens inward. Suddenly, in the midst of the crowd, a voice rings out: "Back, stand back from the door; the closer you press against it, the less the chance of escape; stand back; that is your only chance of safety!" Whether I am alone in

understanding this command, or whether others with me also hear and understand, I have but one duty, and that is, from the moment I have heard and understood, to fall back from the door and to call upon every one to obey the voice of the saviour. I may be suffocated, I may be crushed beneath the feet of the multitude, I may perish; my sole chance of safety is to do the one thing necessary to gain an exit. And I can do nothing else. A saviour should be a saviour, that is, one who saves. And the salvation of Jesus is the true salvation. He came, he preached his doctrine, and humanity is saved. The circus may burn in an hour, and those penned up in it may have no time to escape. But the world has been burning for eighteen hundred years; it has burned ever since Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth;" and I suffer as it burns, and it will continue to burn until humanity is saved. Was not this fire kindled that men might have the felicity of salvation? Understanding this, I understood and believed that Jesus is not only the Messiah, that is, the Anointed One, the Christ, but that he is in truth the Saviour of the world. I know that he is the only way, that there is no other way for me or for those who are tormented with me in this life. I know, that for me as for all, there is no other safety than the fulfilment of the commandments of Jesus, who gave to all humanity the greatest conceivable sum of benefits. Would there be great trials to endure? Should I die in following the doctrine of Jesus? This question did not alarm me. It might seem frightful to any one who does not realize the nothingness and absurdity of an isolated personal life, and who believes that he will never die. But I know that my life, considered in relation to my individual happiness, is, taken by itself, a stupendous farce, and that this meaningless existence will end in a stupid death. Knowing this, I have nothing to fear. I shall die as others die who do not observe the doctrine of Jesus; but my life and my death will have a meaning for myself and for others. My life and my death will have added

something to the life and salvation of others, and this will be in accordance with the doctrine of Jesus.

