

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

Christianity Not As A Mystical Teaching But As A New
Concept of Life

by Leo Tolstoy

[Podcast 8 of 13]

[Dear Soul, This book has been edited to begin with Chapter Five instead of the Author's original Preface and Chapters One through Four. Chapters One through Four are essentially a defense of Tolstoy's previous book on Christianity, entitled My Religion, a fascinating book which emphasizes the importance of adhering to the teachings of Jesus Christ. For one who is already familiar with that previous book, the Author's original order is not — in the view of the editor — most effective. Tolstoy's opening chapters, which are still good to read, are included after Chapter Twelve.

Peace be with you, Alan Lewis Silva, editor]

[CHAPTER 12 (Continues)]

Part 3 When the eyes shall be opened to this terrible deception which is practised on men, one must marvel how preachers of the religion of Christianity and morality, educators of youth, simply good, intelligent parents, who always exist in every society, can preach any doctrine of morality amidst a society in which all the churches and governments openly acknowledge that tortures and

murders form an indispensable condition of the life of all men, and that amidst all men there must always be some special men, who are prepared to kill their brothers, and that every one of us may be such. How can children and youths be taught and men in general be enlightened, to say nothing of the enlightenment in the Christian spirit, how can they be taught any morality by the side of the doctrine that murder is indispensable for the maintenance of the common, consequently of our own, well-being, and so is legitimate, and that there are men (any of us may be these men) whose duty it is to torture and kill our neighbors and to commit all kinds of crime at the will of those who have the power in their hands? If it is possible and right to torture and kill and commit all kinds of crimes by the will of those who have the power in their hands, there is, and there can be, no moral teaching, but there is only the right of the stronger. And so it is. In reality, such a teaching, which for some men is theoretically justified by the theory of the struggle for existence, does exist in our society. Really, what kind of a moral teaching can there be, which would admit murder for any purposes whatsoever? This is as impossible as any mathematical doctrine, which would admit that two is equal to three. With the admission of the fact that two is equal to three there may be a semblance of mathematics, but there can be no real mathematical knowledge. With the admission of murder in the form of executions, wars, self-defence, there may be a semblance of morality, but no real morality. The recognition of the sacredness of every man's life is the first and only foundation of all morality. The doctrine of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life was put aside by Christianity for the very reason that this doctrine is only a justification of immorality, only a semblance of justice, and is devoid of sense. Life is a quantity which has no weight and no measure and which cannot be equalized to any other, and so the destruction of one life for another can

have no meaning. Besides, every social law is a law which has for its purpose the improvement of human life. But in what way can the destruction of the lives of a few individuals improve the lives of men? The destruction of life is not like its improvement, but an act of suicide. The destruction of another man's life for the purpose of preserving justice is like what a man would do who, to mend the calamity which consists in his having lost one arm, should for the sake of justice cut off his other arm. But, to say nothing of the sin of deception, with which the most terrible crime presents itself to men as their duty; to say nothing of the terrible crime of using Christ's name and authority for the purpose of legalizing what is most denied by this same Christ, as is done in the case of the oath; to say nothing of the offence by means of which not only the bodies, but even the souls of "these little ones" are ruined; to say nothing of all that, how can men, even in view of their personal security, men who think highly of their forms of life, their progress, admit the formation among them of that terrible, senseless, cruel, pernicious force which is established by every organized government that rests on the army? The most cruel and terrible of robber bands is not so terrible as such a state organization. Every leader of robbers is none the less limited in his power, because the men who form his band retain at least a small part of their human liberty and may oppose the performance of acts contrary to their conscience. But for men forming a part of a regularly organized government with an army, with discipline carried to the point to which it is at the present time, there are no barriers whatsoever. There are no crimes so terrible that they would not be committed by men forming a part of the government and of the army, by the will of him who accidentally (Boulangier, Pugachév, Napoleon) may stand at its head. Frequently, when I see, not only the levies of recruits, the military exercises, the manoeuvres, but also the policemen with loaded revolvers,

the sentries standing with guns and adjusted bayonets; when I hear (as I do in the Khamóvnik, where I live) for whole days the whistling and the pinging of bullets striking the target; and when I see, in the very city where every attempt at self-help and violence is prohibited, where there is a prohibition against the sale of powder, medicines, fast driving, unlicensed medical practice, and so forth, when I see in this same city thousands of disciplined men, who have been taught to commit murder and who are subject to one man — I ask myself: “How can the men who think so highly of their security bear all this?” To say nothing of the harmfulness and immorality, nothing can be more dangerous than this. How can all men, I do not say Christians, Christian pastors, but all philanthropists, moralists, all those men who value their lives, their security, their well-being, quietly look on? This organization will certainly act in the same way, no matter in whose hands it may be: today, let us say, this power is in the hands of an endurable ruler; tomorrow a Biron, an Elizabeth, a Catherine, a Pugachév, a Napoleon the First, a Napoleon the Third may usurp it. And again, the man in whose hands is the power, and who today may be endurable, may tomorrow turn into a beast, or his place may be taken by an insane or half-witted heir of his, as was the case with the King of Bavaria and Paul. And not only these higher rulers, but also all those minor satraps, who are distributed everywhere like so many Baránovs, chiefs of police, even rural officers, commanders of companies, under-officers, may commit terrible crimes before there has been time to depose them, as happens constantly. Involuntarily one asks himself: “How can men permit such things to happen, if not for the sake of higher considerations of state, at least for the sake of their security?” The answer to this question is this, that it is not all men who permit this to happen (one part of them — the great majority of men — the deceived and the subjected,

cannot help but permit anything to be done), but those who with such an organization hold an advantageous position; they permit it, because for them the risk of suffering, because at the head of the government or the army there may be a senseless or cruel man, is always less than the disadvantages to which they would be subjected in case of the destruction of the organization itself. The judge, policeman, governor, officer will hold his position equally under Boulanger, or a republic, or Pugachév or Catherine; but he will certainly lose his position, if the existing order, which secures for him his advantageous position, falls to pieces. And so all these men are not afraid of who will stand at the head of the organization of violence — they adapt themselves to anybody — but only of the destruction of the organization itself, and so they always support it, often unconsciously. One often marvels why free men, who are not urged to it by anything, the so-called flower of society, enter the army, in Russia, in England, Germany, Austria, even France, and why they seek an opportunity for becoming murderers. Why do parents, moral men, send their children to institutions which prepare them for military matters? Why do mothers buy their children helmets, guns, swords as their favorite toys? (The children of peasants never play soldier.) Why do good men, and even women, who are in no way connected with military affairs, go into ecstasies over the exploits of a Skobelévski and of others, and why do they take so much pains to praise them? Why do men, who are not urged to do so, who do not receive any salary for it, like the marshals of nobility in Russia, devote whole months of assiduous work to performing a physically hard and morally agonizing piece of business — the reception of recruits? Why do all the emperors and kings wear military costumes, attend manœuvres and parades, distribute rewards to soldiers, erect monuments to generals and conquerors? Why do free, wealthy men consider it an honor to perform lackeys'

duties to crowned heads, why do they humble themselves, and natter them, and pretend that they believe in the special grandeur of these persons? Why do men, who have long ago stopped believing in the medieval superstitions of the church, and who are unable to believe in them, seriously and invariably pretend that they believe, thus maintaining the offensive and blasphemous religious institution? Why is the ignorance of the masses so zealously guarded, not only by the governments, but also by the free men from the higher classes? Why do they with such fury attack every attempt at destroying the religious superstitions, and every true enlightenment of the masses? Why do men — historians, novelists, poets — who can certainly receive nothing for their flattery, describe as heroes long deceased emperors, kings, or generals? Why do men who call themselves learned devote their whole lives to the formation of theories, from which it follows that violence which is exerted by the power against the nation is not violence, but some especial right? One often marvels why, for what reason a lady of the world or an artist, who, it would seem, is interested neither in social, nor in military questions, condemns labor strikes and preaches war, and always definitely attacks one side and defends the other? But one marvels at this only so long as one does not know that this is all done so because all the men of the ruling classes feel instinctively what it is that maintains and what destroys the organization under which they can enjoy the privileges they are enjoying. The lady of the world has not even made the reflection that, if there are no capitalists, and no armies to defend them, her husband will have no money, and she will have no salon and no costumes; and the artist has not made the reflection as to this, that he needs the capitalists, who are protected by the armies, to buy his pictures; but the instinct, which in this case takes the place of reason, guides them unerringly. It is precisely the same instinct that with few exceptions guides all those

men who support all those political, religious, economic establishments, which are advantageous to them. But can the men of the upper classes maintain this order of things, only because it is advantageous for them? These men cannot help but see that this order of things is in itself irrational, no longer corresponds to the degree of men's consciousness, not even to public opinion, and is full of dangers. The men of the ruling classes — the honest, good, clever men among them — cannot help but suffer from these internal contradictions, and cannot help but see the dangers with which this order threatens them. Is it possible the men of the lower classes, all the millions of these people, can with a calm conscience perform all these obviously bad acts, tortures, and murders, which they are compelled to perform, only because they are afraid of punishment? Indeed, that could not have been, and neither the men of the one class nor of the other could help but see the irrationality of their activity, if the peculiarity of the state structure did not conceal from them the whole unnaturalness and irrationality of the acts committed by them. This irrationality is concealed by the fact that in the commission of each of these acts there are so many instigators, accomplices, abettors, that not one of the men taking part in it feels himself to be morally responsible. Murderers compel all the persons who are present at a murder to strike the dead victim, so that the responsibility may be distributed among the largest possible number of men. The same thing, having assumed definite forms, has established itself in the structure of the state in the commission of all those crimes, without the constant commission of which no state organization is thinkable. The rulers of the state always try to draw as large a number of citizens as possible into the greatest possible participation in all the crimes committed by them and indispensable for them. Of late this has found a most lucid expression in the drafting of the citizens into the courts in

the form of jurors, into the armies in the form of soldiers, and into the local government and into the legislative assembly in the form of electors and representatives. In the structure of the state, in which, as in a basket made of rods, all the ends are so concealed that it is not possible to find them, the responsibility for crimes committed is so concealed from men that they, in committing the most awful deeds, do not see their own responsibility in them. In olden times the tyrants were blamed for the commission of evil deeds, but in our time most awful crimes, unthinkable even in the time of a Nero, are committed, and there is no one to blame. Some men demanded, others decreed, others again confirmed, others proposed, others reported, others prescribed, others executed. Women, old men, innocent people, are killed, hanged, flogged to death, as lately happened in Russia in the Yuzovsky Plant, and as happens everywhere in Europe and in America, in the struggle with anarchists and all kinds of violators of the existing order; hundreds, thousands of men will be shot to death, killed, and hanged, or, as is done in wars, millions of men will be killed or ruined, or, as is constantly done, the souls of men are ruined in solitary confinement, in the debauched condition of militarism — and no one is to blame. On the lowest stage of the social ladder, soldiers with guns, pistols, swords, torture and kill men, and with the same tortures and murders compel men to enter the army, and are fully convinced that the responsibility for these acts is taken from them by those authorities who prescribe these acts to them. On the highest stage, kings, presidents, ministers, Chambers, prescribe these tortures and murders and the enlistment of soldiers, and are fully convinced that, since they are put into their places by God, or since the society which they rule over demands from them precisely what they prescribe, they cannot be blamed. In the middle between the two are the intermediate persons, who order the tortures and murders and the enlistment of soldiers,

and they are fully convinced that their responsibility has been taken from them, partly by the commands from above, and partly because the same orders are demanded of them by all those who stand on the lower stages. The administrative and the executive powers, which lie at the two extremes of the structure of the state, meet like two ends that are united into a ring, and one conditions and maintains the other and all the intervening links. Without the conviction that there exists such a person, or such a number of persons, who take upon themselves the responsibility for the acts committed, not one soldier would be able to raise his hands for the purpose of torturing or killing. Without the conviction that this is demanded by the whole nation, not one emperor, king, president, not one assembly would be able to prescribe these same tortures and murders. Without the conviction that there are persons who stand above him and take upon themselves the responsibility for his act, and men who stand below him and demand the fulfilment of such acts for their own good, not one of the men who stand on the stages intermediate between the ruler and the soldier would be able to commit those acts which he is committing. The structure of the state is such that, no matter on what rung of the social ladder a man may stand, his degree of irresponsibility is always one and the same: the higher he stands the more is he subjected to the influence of the demand for orders from below and the less he is subjected to the influence of the prescriptions from above, and vice versa. Thus, in the case before me, every one who had taken part in the matter was the more under the influence of the demand for orders from below and the less under the influence of prescriptions from above, the higher his position was, and vice versa. But not only do all men who are connected with the structure of the state shift their responsibility for deeds committed upon others: the peasant who is drafted into the army, upon the nobleman or merchant who has become an

officer; and the officer, upon the nobleman who holds the position of governor; and the governor, upon the son of an official or nobleman who occupies the position of minister; and the minister, upon a member of the imperial house who holds the position of emperor; and the emperor again, upon all these officials, noblemen, merchants, and peasants; not only do men in this manner free themselves from the consciousness of responsibility for acts committed by them — they even lose the moral consciousness of their responsibility for this other reason, that, uniting into a political structure, they so constantly, continuously, and tensely convince themselves and others that they are not all identical men, but men who differ from one another as does “one star from another,” that they begin themselves sincerely to believe so. Thus they convince one set of men that they are not simple men, identical with others, but a special kind of men, who have to be honored, while they impress others with the idea that they stand beneath all other men and so must unflinchingly submit to what they are commanded to do by their superiors. On this inequality and exaltation of one class of men and the annihilation of the other is mainly based the inability of men to see the irrationality of the existing order and its cruelty and criminality, and of that deception which is practised by some and to which the others submit. Some, those who are impressed with the idea that they are vested with some supernatural significance and grandeur, are so intoxicated by this imaginary grandeur that they stop seeing their responsibility in the acts committed by them; the other men, who, on the contrary, are impressed with the idea that they are insignificant creatures, who must in everything submit to the higher, in consequence of this constant condition of humiliation fall into a strange condition of intoxication of servility, and under the influence of their intoxication also fail to see the significance of their acts, and lose the consciousness of

their responsibility for them. The intermediate people, who, partly submitting to the higher, and partly considering themselves to be superior, succumb simultaneously to the intoxication of power and that of servility, and so I lose the consciousness of their responsibility. We need but look in any country at a superior chief, intoxicated by his grandeur, accompanied by his staff, all of them on magnificently caparisoned horses, in special uniforms and signs of distinction, as he, to the sound of the harmonious and festive music produced by wind-instruments, rides past a line of soldiers stiffened up from a sense of servility and presenting arms — we need but look at him, in order that we may understand that at these moments the highest chief and the soldier and all the intermediate persons, being in a state of intoxication, are equally capable of committing acts which they would not think of committing under other circumstances. But the intoxication experienced by men under such phenomena as are parades, imperial receptions, church solemnities, coronations, is a temporary and acute condition; there are also other, chronic, constant conditions of intoxication, which are equally experienced by all men who have any power, from the power of the emperor to that of a policeman in the street, and by men who submit to power and who are in a condition of intoxication through servility, and who in justification of this their condition always ascribe, as has always shown itself in the case of slaves, the greatest significance and dignity to him whom they obey. On this deception of the inequality of men and the resulting intoxication of power and of servility is preeminently based the ability of men united into a political structure to commit, without experiencing any pangs of conscience, acts which are contrary to their conscience. Under the influence of such an intoxication, both of power and of servility, men present themselves to themselves and to others, not as what they are in reality — men — but as especial, conventional beings — noblemen, merchants,

governors, judges, officers, kings, ministers, soldiers, who no longer are subject to common human obligations, but, above all else, and before all human, to nobiliary, commercial, gubernatorial, judicial, military, royal, ministerial obligations. Thus, the proprietor who litigated concerning the forest did what he did only because he did not present himself to himself as a simple man, like any of the peasants who were living by his side, but as a large landed proprietor and a member of the gentry, and so, under the influence of the intoxication of power, he felt himself insulted by the pretensions of the peasants. It was only for this reason that, without paying any attention to the consequences which might arise from his demand, he handed in the petition requesting the restitution of his imaginary right. Similarly, the judges who irregularly adjudged the forest to the proprietor did so only because they do not imagine themselves to be simple men, just like all other men, and so under obligation in all cases to be guided only by what is the truth, but under the intoxication of power they imagine themselves to be the guardians of justice, who cannot err; but under the influence of the intoxication of servility they imagine themselves to be men who are obliged to carry out certain words which are written in a certain book and are called the law. As just such conventional persons, and not as what they are in reality, present themselves, under the influence of the intoxication of power and of servility, to themselves and to others, all the other participants in this matter, from the highest representatives of power, who sign their approval on documents, from the marshal, who drafts recruits at the levy of soldiers, and the priest, who deceives them, to the last soldier, who is now getting ready to shoot at his brothers. They all did what they did, and are preparing themselves to do what awaits them, only because they present themselves to themselves and to others, not as what they are in reality — men who are confronted with the

question as to whether they should take part in a matter which is condemned by their conscience, or not — but as different conventional persons — one, as an anointed king, a special being, who is called upon to care for the well-being of one hundred million men; another, as a representative of nobility; a third, as a priest, who with his ordainment has received a special grace; a fourth, as a soldier, who is obliged by his oath to fulfil without reflection what he is commanded to do. Only under the influence of the intoxication of power and servility, which result from their imaginary positions, can all these men do what they do. If all these men did not have a firm conviction that the callings of kings, ministers, governors, judges, noblemen, landed proprietors, marshals, officers, soldiers, are something actually in existence and very important, not one of these men would think without terror and disgust of participating in the acts which he is committing now. The conventional positions, which were established hundreds of years ago, which have been recognized through the ages, and which are now recognized by all men about us, and which are designated by special names and particular attires, and which, besides, are maintained by means of every kind of magnificence and effects on the outer senses, are to such a degree instilled in people that they, forgetting the habitual conditions of life, common to all, begin to look upon themselves and upon all men only from this conventional point of view, and are guided by nothing but this conventional point of view in the valuation of other men's acts. Thus a mentally sound old man, for no other reason than that some trinket or fool's dress is put over him, some keys on his buttocks, or a blue ribbon, which is proper only for a dressed-up little girl, and that he is on that occasion impressed with the idea that he is a general, a chamberlain, a Cavalier of St. Andrews, or some such silliness, suddenly becomes self-confident, proud, and even happy; or, on the contrary, because he

loses or does not receive a desired trinket or name, becomes so sad and unhappy that he even grows sick. Or, what is even more startling, an otherwise mentally sound, free, and even well-to-do young man, for no other reason than that he calls himself, and others call him, an investigating magistrate or County Council chief, seizes an unfortunate widow away from her minor children, and locks her up, or has her locked up in a prison, leaving her children without a mother, and all that because this unfortunate woman secretly trafficked in liquor and thus deprived the Crown of twenty-five roubles of revenue, and he does not feel the least compunction about it. Or, what is even more startling, an otherwise intelligent and meek man, only because a brass plate or a uniform is put on him and he is told that he is a watchman or a customs soldier, begins to shoot with bullets at men, and neither he nor those who surround him consider him blameworthy for it, and would even blame him if he did not shoot; I do not even speak of the judges and jurors, who sentence to executions, and of the military, who kill thousands without the least compunction, only because they have been impressed with the idea that they are not simply men, but jurors, judges, generals, soldiers. Such a constant, unnatural, and strange condition of men in the life of the state is generally expressed in words as follows: "As a man I pity him, but as a watchman, judge, general, governor, king, soldier, I must kill or torture him," as though there can exist a given position, acknowledged by men, which can make void duties which are imposed upon each of us by a man's position. Thus, for example, in the present case, men are travelling to commit murder and tortures on hungry people, and they recognize that in the dispute between the peasants and the proprietor the peasants are in the right (all men in authority told me so), and know that the peasants are unfortunate, poor, and hungry; the proprietor is rich and does not inspire sympathy, and all these men

none the less are on their way to kill the peasants, in order thus to secure three thousand roubles to the proprietor, for no other reason than that these men at this moment do not consider themselves to be men, but a governor, a general of gendarmes, an officer, a soldier, and think that not the eternal demands of their consciences, but the accidental, temporary demands of their positions as officers and soldiers are binding on them. However strange this may seem, the only explanation for this remarkable phenomenon is this, that these men are in the same position as those hypnotized persons who are commanded to imagine and feel themselves in certain conventional positions, and to act like those beings whom they represent; thus, for example, when a hypnotized person receives the suggestion that he is lame, he begins to limp, or that he is blind, he does not see, or that he is an animal, he begins to bite. In this state are not only the men who are travelling on this train, but also all men who preferably perform their social and their political duties, to the disadvantage of their human duties. The essence of this condition is this, that the men under the influence of the one idea suggested to them are not able to reflect upon their acts, and so do, without any reflection, what is prescribed to them in correspondence with the suggested idea, and what they are led up to through example, advice, or hints. The difference between those who are hypnotized by artificial means and those who are under the influence of the political suggestion consists in this, that to the artificially hypnotized their imaginary condition is suggested at once, by one person, and for the briefest space of time, and so the suggestion presents itself to us in a glaring form, which sets us to wondering, while to the men who act under the political suggestion their imaginary position is suggested by degrees, slowly, imperceptibly, from childhood, at times not only in a certain number of years, but through whole generations, and, besides, is not

suggested by one person, but by all those who surround them. "But," I shall be told, "in all societies the majority of men — all the children, all the women, who are absorbed in the labor of pregnancy, child-bearing, and nursing, all the enormous masses of the working people, who are placed under the necessity of tense and assiduous physical labor, all the mentally weak by nature, all abnormal men with a weakened spiritual activity in consequence of nicotine, alcohol, and opium poisoning, or for some other reason — all these men are always in such a condition that, not being able to reason independently, they submit either to those men who stand on a higher stage of rational consciousness, or to family and political traditions, to what is called public opinion, and in this submission there is nothing unnatural or contradictory." And, indeed, there is nothing unnatural in it, and the ability of unthinking people to submit to the indications of men standing on a higher stage of consciousness is a constant property of men, that property in consequence of which men, submitting to the same rational principles, are able to live in societies: some — the minority — by consciously submitting to the same rational principles, on account of their agreement with the demands of their reason; the others — the majority — by submitting unconsciously to the same principles, only because these demands have become the public opinion. Such a subjection of the unthinking to public opinion presents nothing unnatural so long as the public opinion is not split up. But there are times when the higher truth, as compared with the former degree of the consciousness of the truth, which at first is revealed to a few men, in passing by degrees from one set to another, embraces such a large number of men that the former public opinion, which is based on a lower stage of consciousness, begins to waver, and the new is ready to establish itself, but is not yet established. There are times, resembling spring, when the old public opinion has not yet been destroyed and the new

is not yet established, and when men begin to criticize their own acts and those of others on the basis of the new consciousness, and yet in life, from inertia, from tradition, continue to submit to principles which only in former times formed the higher degree of rational consciousness, but which now are already in an obvious contradiction to it. And then the men, feeling, on the one hand, the necessity of submitting to the new public opinion, and not daring, on the other, to depart from the former, find themselves in an unnatural, wavering state. It is in such a condition that, in relation to the Christian truths, are not only the men on this train, but also the majority of the men of our time. In the same condition are equally the men of the higher classes, who enjoy exclusive, advantageous positions, and the men of the lower classes, who without opposition obey what they are commanded to obey. Some, the men of the ruling classes, who no longer possess any rational explanation for the advantageous positions held by them, are put to the necessity, for the purpose of maintaining these positions, of suppressing in themselves the higher rational faculties of love and of impressing upon themselves the necessity for their exclusive position; the others, the lower classes, who are oppressed by labor and purposely stupefied, are in a constant state of suggestion, which is unflinchingly and constantly produced on them by the men of the higher classes. Only thus can be explained those remarkable phenomena with which our life is filled, and as a striking example of which there presented themselves to me my good, peaceful acquaintances, whom I met on September 9th, and who with peace of mind were travelling to commit a most beastly, senseless, and base crime. If the consciences of these men had not been in some way put to sleep, not one of them would be able to do one hundredth part of what they are getting ready to do, and, in all probability, will do. It cannot be said that they do not have the conscience which forbids them to do what they are

about to do, as there was no such conscience in men four hundred, three hundred, two hundred, one hundred years ago, when they burned people at the stake, tortured people, and flogged them to death; it exists in all these men, but it is put to sleep in them — in some, the ruling men, who are in exclusive, advantageous positions, by means of auto-suggestion, as the psychologists call it; in the others, the executors, the soldiers by a direct, conscious suggestion, hypnotization, produced by the upper classes. The conscience is in these men put to sleep, but it exists in them, and through the auto-suggestion and suggestion, which hold sway over them, it already speaks in them and may awaken any moment. All these men are in a condition resembling the one a hypnotized man would be in, if it were suggested to him and he were commanded to do an act which is contrary to everything which he considers rational and good — to kill his mother or child. The hypnotized man feels himself bound by the suggestion induced in him, and it seems to him that he cannot stop; at the same time, the nearer he comes to the time and the place of the commission of the crime, the stronger does the drowned voice of the conscience rise in him, and he begins to show more and more opposition and to writhe, and wants to wake up. And it is impossible to say in advance whether he will do the suggested act, or not, and what it is that will win, the rational consciousness or the irrational suggestion. Everything depends on the relative strength of the two. Precisely the same is now taking place in all the men on this train, and in general in all the men who in our time commit political acts of violence and exploit them. There was a time when men, who went out for the purpose of torturing and killing people, for the purpose of setting an example, did not return otherwise than having performed the act for which they had gone out, and, having performed the act, they were not tormented by repentance and doubt, but, having flogged men to death, calmly returned home to

their family, and petted their children — jested, laughed, and abandoned themselves to quiet domestic pleasures. It did not then occur even to those who gained by these acts of violence, to the landed proprietors and the rich men, that the advantages which they enjoyed had any direct connection with these cruelties. But now it is not so: men know already, or are very near to knowing, what they are doing, and for what purpose they are doing what they are doing. They may shut their eyes and cause their consciences to be inactive, but with eyes unshut and consciences unimpaired they — both those who commit the acts and those who gain by them — no longer can fail to see the significance which these acts have. It happens that men understand the significance of what they have done only after they have performed the act; or it happens that they understand it before the very act. Thus the men who had in charge the tortures in Nízхни-Nóvgorod, Sarátov, Orél, Yuzovsky Plant, understood the significance of what they did only after the commission of the act, and now they are tormented with shame before public opinion and before their consciences. Both those who ordered the tortures and those who executed them are tormented. I have spoken with soldiers who have executed such acts, and they have always cautiously evaded all conversation about it; when they spoke, they did so with perplexity and terror. Cases happen when men come to their senses immediately before the commission of the act. Thus I know a case of a sergeant, who during a pacification was beaten by two peasants, and who reported accordingly, but who the next day, when he saw the tortures to which the peasants were subjected, begged the commander of the company to tear up the report and to discharge the peasants who had beaten him. I know a case when the soldiers, who were commanded to shoot some men, declined to obey; and I know many cases where the commanders refused to take charge of tortures and murders. Thus it happens that the

men who establish violence and those who commit acts of violence at times come to their senses long before the commission of the act suggested to them, at others before the very act, and at others again after the act. The men who are travelling on this train have gone out to torture and kill their brothers, but not one of them knows whether he will do what he has set out to do, or not. No matter how hidden for each of them is the responsibility in this matter, no matter how strong the suggestion may be, in all these men, that they are not men, but governors, rural judges, officers, soldiers, and that, as such beings, they may violate their human obligations, the nearer they approach the place of their destination, the stronger will the doubt rise in them whether they should do what they have started out to do, and this doubt will reach the highest degree when they reach the very moment of the execution. The governor, in spite of all the intoxication of the surrounding circumstance, cannot help but reflect for a moment, when he has to give his last decisive command concerning the murder or the torture. He knows that the case of the Governor of Orél provoked the indignation of the best men of society, and he himself, under the influence of the public opinion of those circles to which he belongs, has more than once expressed his disapproval of it; he knows that the prosecutor, who was to have gone with them, refused outright to take part in this business, because he considered it disgraceful; he knows also that changes may take place in the government at any time, and that in consequence of them that which was a desert today may tomorrow be the cause of disfavor; he knows, too, that there is a press, if not in Russia, at least abroad, which may describe this matter and so disgrace him for life. He already scents that new public opinion which is making void what the former public opinion demanded. Besides, he cannot be absolutely sure that at the last moment the executors will obey him. He wavers, and it is impossible to

foretell what he will do. The same thing, in a greater or lesser measure, is experienced by all the officials and officers who are travelling with him. They all know in the depth of their hearts that the deed which is to be done is disgraceful, that participation in it lowers and denies a man in the eyes of a few men, whose opinion they already value. They know that it is a shame to appear after the torture or murder of defenceless men in the presence of their fiancées or wives, whom they treat with a show of tenderness. Besides, like the governor, they are in doubt whether the soldiers are sure to obey them. And, no matter how unlike it is to the self-confident look with which all these ruling men now move in the station and up and down the platform, they all in the depth of their hearts suffer and even waver. It is for this very reason that they assume this confident tone, in order to conceal their inner wavering. And this sensation increases in proportion as they come nearer to the place of action. However imperceptible this may be, and however strange it may appear, all this mass of young soldiers, who seem so subservient, is in the same state. They are all of them no longer the soldiers of former days, men who have renounced their natural life of labor, and who have devoted their lives exclusively to dissipation, rapine, and murder, like some Roman legionaries or the warriors of the Thirty-Years War, or even the late soldiers of twenty-five years of service; they are, for the most part, men who have but lately been taken away from their families, all of them full of recollections of that good, natural, and sensible life from which they have been taken away. All these lads, who for the most part come from the country, know what business is taking them out on the train; they know that the proprietors always offend their brothers, the peasants, and that therefore the same thing is taking place here. Besides, the greater half of these men know how to read, books, and not all books are those in which the business of war is lauded — there are also those

in which its immorality is pointed out. Amidst them frequently serve freethinking companions — volunteer soldiers — and just such liberal young officers, and into their midst has been thrown the seed of doubt as to the unconditional legality and valor of their activity. It is true, all of them have passed through that terrible, artificial drill, worked out by ages, which kills all independence in a man, and they are so accustomed to mechanical obedience that at the words of command, “Fire by company! Company, fire!” and so forth, their guns rise mechanically and the habitual motions take place. But “Fire!” will not mean now having fun while shooting at a target, but killing their tormented, offended fathers and brothers, who — here they are — are standing in crowds, with their women and children in the street, and shouting and waving their hands. Here they are — one of them, with a sparse beard, in a patched caftan and in bast shoes, just like their own fathers at home in the Government of Kazán or of Ryazán; another, with a gray beard and stooping shoulders, carrying a large stick, just like their father’s father, their grandfather; another, a young lad in boots and red shirt, exactly as the soldier who is now to shoot at him was a year ago. And here is a woman in bast shoes and linen skirt, just like mother at home — Are they really going to shoot at them? God knows what each soldier will do during this last moment. One slightest indication as to its not being right, above all as to the possibility of not doing it, one such word, one hint, will be sufficient, in order to stop them. All men who are travelling on this train will, when they proceed to execute the deed for which they have set out, be in the same position in which a hypnotized person would be, who has received the suggestion to chop a log, and, having walked up to what has been pointed out to him as a log and having raised the axe to strike, suddenly sees or is told that it is not a log, but his sleeping brother. He may perform the act suggested to him, and he may wake up before its

performance. Even so all these men may awaken, or not. If they do not, as terrible a deed as the one in Orél will be done, and in other men the auto-suggestion and the suggestion under which they act will be increased; if they awaken, such a deed will not only not be performed, but many others, upon finding out the turn which the affair has taken, will be freed from that suggestion in which they are, or at least will approach such a liberation. But if not all men travelling on this train shall awaken and refrain from doing the deed which has been begun, if only a few of them shall do so and shall boldly express to other men the criminality of this affair, these few men even may have the effect of awakening all the other men from the suggestion, under which they are, and the proposed evil deed will not take place. More than that: if only a few men, who do not take part in this affair, but are only present at the preparations for the same, or who have heard of similar acts previously committed, will not remain indifferent, but will frankly and boldly express their disgust with the participants in these matters, and will point out to them their whole senselessness, cruelty, and criminality, even that will not pass unnoticed. Even so it was in the present case. A few persons, participants and non-participants in this affair, who were free from suggestion, needed but at the time when they were getting ready for this affair boldly to express their indignation with tortures administered in other places, and their disgust and contempt for those men who took part in them; in the present Túla affair a few persons needed but to express their unwillingness to take part in it; the lady passenger and a few other persons at the station needed but in the presence of those who were travelling on the train to express their indignation at the act which was about to be committed; one of the regimental commanders, a part of whose troops were demanded for the pacification, needed but to express his opinion that the military cannot be executioners — and

thanks to these and certain other, seemingly unimportant, private influences exerted against people under suggestion, the affair would take a different turn, and the troops, upon arriving on the spot, would not commit any tortures, but would cut down the forest and give it to the proprietor. If there should not be in certain men any clear consciousness as to their doing wrong, and if there should be, in consequence of this, no mutual influence of men in this sense, there would take place the same as in Orél. But if this consciousness should be even stronger, and so the amount of the interactions even greater than what it was, it is very likely that the governor and his troops would not even dare to cut down the forest, in order to give it to the proprietor. If this consciousness had been even stronger and the amount of interactions greater, it is very likely the governor would not even have dared to travel to the place of action. If the consciousness had been stronger still and the amount of interactions even greater, it is very likely that the minister would not have made up his mind to prescribe, and the emperor to confirm such a decree. Everything, consequently, depends on the force with which the Christian truth is cognized by every individual man. And so, it would seem, the activity of all the men of our time, who assert that they wish to continue to the welfare of humanity, should be directed to the increase of the lucidity of the demands of the Christian truth.

