

# TO THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF LEO TOLSTOY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The article is devoted to the disclosure of the religious and moral views of Leo Tolstoy. Particular attention is paid to the writer's understanding of the teachings of Christ, which were distorted by representatives of the church.*

**Key words:** Tolstoy, religion, morality, the doctrine of Christ, distortion.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The work of the outstanding Russian writer Leo Tolstoy has always attracted and still attracts many researchers with its versatility, multidimensionality and breadth of capture not narrowly human problems related, for example, only to the Russian people, but to global problems of a universal character. Creativity Tolstoy, according to most scholars, is universal. It is universal not only because it reflects many themes and problems of a universal character, but also because the solution of each problem (regardless of their significance for people, although Tolstoy believed that such cannot be, because in human life there are no trifles - it means everything is significant) required the writer to study the subject thoroughly and comprehensively till its full comprehension and systematization of key situations that ensure the searching truth, in which these or other conclusions leave no doubt. This is, in general, Tolstoy's attitude to all manifestations of life. The Tolstoy logists already noticed that the writer from his early works (and in his diary entries) gave burning questions and tried to answer them throughout his life and creativity, or to give his understanding of the definition and solution of the issue.

## **2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW**

It is known that Tolstoy was interested in everything, but in this large field, most of all he was attracted by various religious teachings. He deeply studied at the same time and in an equal form Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam with great zeal. He was attracted by all holiness Christ and Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius, and Lao Tzu. In this sublime, radiant, holy Pantheon, he wanted to understand the basic tenets of the moral laws of the universe. He was well aware that all religions are called to lead to enlightenment, to understanding good and evil, to realizing the meaning of life; that all the prophets sent down by God carried the word of God to the people so that people would follow the moral laws of the universe, not commit sins and live according to the laws of Good and Justice. Perhaps, to many mortals such zeal seemed absurd, and worthless. But Tolstoy spent his whole life

looking for the Truth and tried to share his thoughts with his reader. We encounter these searches in every work of the writer, in the spiritual dialectics of each of his characters. This is the world of Tolstoy, comprehended by himself, his lack of understanding and his desire to understand him.

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHOD**

Having lived 55 years, Tolstoy came to the conclusion that 35 years of his life, with the exception of 14 or 15 years of childhood, he lived as a nihilist "in the real meaning of this word, that is, not a socialist and a revolutionary, but as usual meaning of this word, and a nihilist is the sense of absence all faith" [1]. And in 50 years, when he believed in Christ, his life suddenly changed. He no longer wanted what he wanted before, and began to want what he did not want before "[1]. Moreover, "it seemed good to him before, it seemed bad, and what seemed bad before seemed good" [1]. If before he had the desire to be as far away from home as possible, his desires changed he wanted to be as close to it as possible. The direction of his life became different: "both good and evil changed places" [1]. About these changes, he says in his books "Confession" and "What is my faith?" However, certain thoughts about them were set forth in the "Study of Dogmatic Theology", which was written between the period of writing his first two books. The purpose of these two works was unequivocal: to expose "false church Christianity" and to affirm "its true understanding". And in this case the criticism was conducted from the position of "common sense". From the church dogma was required obedience to the elementary laws of reason. Since the Church traditions, the church philosophy, its symbolism, the Old Testament part of the Bible were abolished, it remained to rely on the Gospel. It was in the Gospel that Tolstoy intended to find the essence of the Christian faith.

Who could Tolstoy see in the image of Jesus of Nazareth? If we know the concept of the life and work of the writer-searcher Tolstoy, then it is easy to assume that Jesus seemed to him a moralist. However, this understanding was radically different from the views of not only the writer's contemporaries, but also of today's researchers. For example, some well-known theologians very often refer to the historian, Tolstoy's contemporary Sergei Trubetskoi, who in his works tries to prove that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a set of moral requirements, but a new life narrated by the Creator to his Son in the hope of creating a New Union between Heaven and Earth, gradually withdrawing the suffering from the imperfect being.

The main difference is noted in their views on the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus. It is known that Tolstoy took it as the "core" of the Gospel. Trubetskoi, on the other hand, is against seeing a purely "ethical" sermon in it. He wrote: "There can be no doubt that Christ did not bring any new metaphysical, philosophical teaching. But at the same time, He can hardly be recognized as an "ethic" or "moralist" in the generally accepted sense of the word. It has long been noted that the individual moral rules of Christ, although not in such perfect completeness and purity, were part of the teaching of Jewish teachers and prophets, partly in the morality of "pagan philosophers" [2]

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Let's pay attention to the final thoughts of the scientist. The statement that "certain moral rules" have already been noted in the teachings of Jewish teachers and prophets does

not preclude the possibility of recognizing "ethics" or "moralists" behind Jesus. On the other hand, such categoricity somewhat reduces the role of Jesus in comparison with the Old Testament predecessor of Moses. Perhaps the mystery of the person of Jesus is unequal to the mystery of the person of Moses. Or, as Trubetskoi thinks, Moses does not carry truth in himself, like Jesus Christ. Let us quote Trubetskoi: "This is the only connection in the history of personal self-consciousness with God-consciousness, which we find only in Him and which constitutes His very being, cannot be explained by the influence of His environment" [3, p. 379]. In this case, we are justified in accepting the same exclusivity for the other prophets - Moses, Buddha, Muhammad. After all, each of them, just like Jesus, received Revelation from the Creator. First, is it true to identify personal consciousness with the consciousness of God, contrary to the principles of all religions and Sacred Books? This contradiction caused Tolstoy to reject the proclamation of the Gospel, and Christianity was accepted by him as a doctrine, whose value is in ethical principles. Yes, one can partly agree with the opinion of Protopriest Alexander Men, who states the following: "All this is not very similar to the Gospel, and even more so to the Christianity of the New Testament as a whole. It is more like the East, and the Far East, China, Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, which Tolstoy so appreciated. A bit of Buddhism. If there was something in Tolstoy's metaphysics not from the East, it was taken not so much from Christianity as from Stoics or moralizing deists and pantheists of the seventeenth century "[1]. We will not argue extensively Tolstoy's thoughts, only note that A.Men, accentuating his attention in the East, remembers that Christianity itself arose in the East and Tolstoy also valued the founder of Islam, Muhammad, as well as other prophets. But for us the following remark of A. Men is valuable: in all religions, the main thing for Tolstoy is faith in the One God, and in all prophets - ethical principles.

We have already noted that the direction of Tolstoy's life has changed in connection with the understanding of the teachings of Christ, which before they were not understood. Each time he makes reservations, he explains to the readers that he is not going to interpret the teachings of Christ to them, but wants to share his understanding of this teaching with them, because it is addressed to all people. He does not impose his thought on us, but simply and clearly shares his impressions that turned his soul and restored his peace and happiness: "Not everyone can be initiated into the deepest secrets of dogmatics, homiletics, patristic, liturgy, hermeneutics, apologetics, etc., but everyone can and must understand what Christ said to all the millions of simple, unwise, people who lived and still are living. So this is the thing that Christ said to all these simple people who had not yet had the opportunity to ask for explanations of his teaching to Paul, Clement, Chrysostom and others, I did not understand this before, but now I understand, and this I want to say to everyone " [1].

Tolstoy compares his salvation with the salvation of a robber on the cross, who believed in Christ. The course of the comparison thoughts is as follows: the writer as well as the robber and most other people lived and lives badly; awareness of this situation, surrounding misfortune and suffering and the way out of it was seen only in death. Tolstoy, like a robber, is nailed to some extent by the cross of the life of suffering and evil. At the same time, the writer sees his difference from the robber in the fact that the latter was already dying, and he lived, and apart from life after the coffin he also had a life in the world. He did not understand this terrible life. But suddenly there was an insight: he heard Christ's words inside himself and understood them - life and death ceased to seem to him evil, and instead of despair, he experienced the joy and happiness of life, inviolable by death.

This painful spiritual process the writer outlined in two great works: "The study of dogmatic theology" and a new translation and the combination of the four Gospels with explanations. In them he consistently tries to disassemble all that "hides from the truth, and verse after verse translated again, combining and uniting the four Gospels" [1]. In the spiritual

world of the writer in the period of work on theology and the texts of the Gospel there was a striking elimination of all that concealed the meaning of the teaching, and a surprising illumination with the light of truth. A key was needed to understand the teachings of Christ, which would reveal to him the truth, excluding doubt with clarity and persuasiveness.

The writer step by step opens to us the process of comprehension of the truth, process which is changing, process contradictory, but being in constant dynamics. In the beginning, in the childhood, it was attracted in reading the Gospel by that doctrine of Christ, "in which the love, humility, humiliation, self-rejection and punishment by good for the evil is preached" [1]. So he understood an entity of Christianity and subordinated himself to orthodox church. But, having subordinated itself to church, it noted that in the church doctrine there is no confirmation, explanation of those beginnings of Christianity which seemed for it principal. Besides, by its recognition rejection from church, was served by strangenesses of church dogmas; recognition and approval of persecutions by church, intrigues and wars, mutual denial of each other different confessions.

Transition of the writer from nihilism to church as it was already told, was caused by consciousness "impossibility of life without faith, without knowledge of the fact that well and badly in addition to the available animal instincts" [1]. However, "the rules this by church about a faith in doctrines about observance of sacraments, posts, prayers", were not necessary to it; "and the rules based on the Christian truth were not" [1].

Most of all writers were confused that all human evil (condemnation of certain people, or the whole people, condemnation of other religions) came true church.

"Christ's doctrine about humility, a neoopinion, forgiveness of offenses, about self-rejection and love in words became famous church, and at the same time what was incompatible with this doctrine was approved in practice" [1].

The writer found permission of the doubts in the Sermon on the Mount of Christ (in three chapters of the Gospel from Matthew). In it Tolstoy caught solemnity of the speech of Jesus, it is a lot of moral, the close for everyone clear and clear rules. At the same time, the writer had dual feeling: on the one hand, "affection when reading those verses – about a cheek setting, return of a shirt, conciliation with all, love to enemies" [1], on the other hand, feeling of disappointment because the words of God were unclear to the majority; quitted so that for rescue it is necessary to renounce the life that called into question obligation of an order of salvation. He was not satisfied with the theologians' explanation that the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount are aimed at the self-improvement of man; At the same time - "the grazing man - all in sin and by his own forces - can not achieve perfection, that the salvation of man in faith, prayer and grace" [1].

Every time he agree with the rules, he was struggling with the doctrine of the church, preaching the opposite: a man is weak and can not do it himself.

In such a situation, Tolstoy had the opportunity to abandon all the interpretations of learned theologians. The key was the fragment from chapter V (verse 39) of the Gospel of Matthew: "You are told: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And I tell you: do not resist evil ... [1]. According to the writer, earlier on an incomprehensible eclipse he missed the last three key words: "I say: do not resist evil" seemed to him contradicting human nature, bringing suffering and deprivation. There has come a certain insight, which means that Christ absolutely does not require suffering for man in the name of his own suffering, but requires completely different. Again, he reads it again in the same text to understand the essence of holy thought more clearly: "Do not resist evil; and, doing so, know that there may be people who, after hitting you on one cheek and not encountering resistance, will strike on the other;

taking the shirt off, they take away the caftan; taking advantage of your work, they will force you to work; will take without giving ... And if this is so, then you still do not resist evil. Those who will beat and offend you, do good after all "[1]. The text clears up the thought and becomes clear that the emphasis falls on the phrase "do not resist evil." And all the subsequent - is a kind of explanation of the accentuating position. Tolstoy understands the words of Christ about the presentation of the cheek and the transfer of the caftan not as His command, which brings suffering, but as a demand not to resist evil, evil if it even suffers for it: "Christ does not say: substitute your cheeks, suffer, and he says: evil, and, to be with you, do not resist evil. These words: do not resist evil or evil, understood in their direct meaning, were for me truly the key that revealed to me everything "[1]. Teaching requires the indispensable fulfillment of the commandment, otherwise man can not enter the Kingdom of God. At the same time, it is stipulated that the fulfillment of the commandment is not difficult, on the contrary, spiritually raises the person by the formula: "My yoke is good, and the burden could easily" [1]. The most important thing is to be imbued with this, get used to it, and not just accept it. Tolstoy realized from childhood that the teaching of Christ is Divine and it is necessary to respect those institutions that are sacred and must preach it. In life, in fact, it was quite the opposite, namely: to answer by all means to the offender, to avenge the personal, family, people's insult, to judge and execute, to fight, that is, to kill others. And all this was sanctified by the Christian blessing. Tolstoy could not and did not want to understand this. Everything around him was in fact a violation of the law of Christ. Moreover, church leaders taught that allegedly a person violates this law, in accordance with human weakness, which can only be removed by the grace of Christ. Secular teachers went further and reached the point of completely denying the exercise of the doctrine. The human being, impregnated with great suggestions, accepted its lusts as a given and did not cause any doubts, but on the contrary - confidence in their evil thoughts, evil words and evil actions. And Tolstoy asked a logical question: it means that there is no connection between teaching and human life, then the teaching remains only an utterance, and not a rule that is obligatory for execution, then this rule should be considered unreasonable and unnecessary. On the other hand, the writer does not agree with the view that the Christian teaching deals with personal salvation, but not with nation-wide affairs: "My personal life is intertwined with the general state, and the state requires of me a non-Christian activity that is directly contrary to the commandment of Christ. Now, with the general military service and the participation of all in court as juries, this dilemma is posed with astounding sharpness to all. Everyone must take the weapon of murder: a gun, a knife. And if you do not kill, then charge the gun and sharpen the knife, that is, be ready to kill. Every citizen must come to court and be a party to the court and punishments, that is, everyone must renounce the commandment of Christ not to resist the evil not only by word, but by deed "[1].

In connection with the final statement, Tolstoy recalls another postulate that follows in the Gospel text for the formula on non-resistance to evil and about rewarding good for evil: "Be merciful as your Father in heaven." Do not judge, and you will not be judged "(Matthew, VII, 1). "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged, condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (Luke, VI, 37). And he confesses that only then did he understand how Christ relates to judicial institutions and departments. And the essence of understanding was expressed in the statement - "do not judge your neighbors with your human institutions" [1]. He not only draws a conclusion, but also builds a logical chain of premises, which determine it. Logical construction of parcels is based on polarities, but not on those polarities that can make up the balance, but on those that are mutually exclusive, antagonistically contradictory: "Christ says: do not resist evil. The purpose of the courts is to resist evil. Christ enjoins: to do good for evil. Christ says: do not disassemble the good and evil. The courts only do that, this analysis.

Christ says: to forgive everyone. To forgive more than once, not seven times, but without end. Loving enemies. Do good to those who hate” [1].

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Tolstoy in his reasoning proceeds from the strict ethical, everyday rules. which show that a person who is himself guilty does not have the right to judge another person, just as a blind person can not see a blind person, a person with a clogged eye can not see rubbish in the eye of another. Hence the conviction that good, facing evil, should not become infected with it, only in this case it overcomes evil.

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