The Only Means

by Leo Tolstoy

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

There are more than one billion working people in the world. All the bread, all the commodities of this world, everything men live and are rich by – all that is made by the working people. But the working people live in constant need, ignorance, slavery, and contempt of all those whom they dress, feed, provide for, and serve.

The land is taken away from them and considered to be the property of those who do not work upon it. Thus, to gain his sustenance from it, a laborer must do everything that the owners of the land demand of him. But if the laborer leaves the land and goes to work in factories or plants, he falls into the slavery of the rich, for whom he must all his life work ten, twelve, and fourteen hours a day, doing somebody else’s monotonous, tedious, and frequently injurious work. If he manages to provide for himself on the land or in doing somebody else’s work and is able to feed himself without suffering want, he will not be left alone. They will demand taxes of him, and will also take him into the army for three, four, or five years, or will compel him to pay special taxes for military affairs. If he wants to use the land without paying for it, arranges a strike and wants to keep other laborers from taking his place, or refuses to pay the taxes, they send the army out against him, wound and kill him, and compel him by force to work and to pay taxes as before.

Thus, the working people live throughout the whole world, not like men, but like beasts of burden. They are compelled all their lives to do, not what they need, but what their oppressors want, and for which their oppressors give them precisely as much food, clothing, and rest as they need in order to be able to work without cessation. But that small part of men which lords it over the working people enjoys everything that the masses produce, and lives in idleness and mad luxury, uselessly and immorally wasting the labors of millions.

Thus live the majority of men in the whole world, not only in Russia, but also in France, in Germany, in England, in China, in India, in Africa – everywhere. Who is to blame for it? And how can it be mended? Some say that those are to blame who, without working on the land, own it, and that the land ought to be given back to the working people. Others say that the rich are to blame, who own the implements of labor – the factories and plants – and that it is necessary that the factories and plants should become the property of the working people. Others again say that the whole structure of life is to blame, and that it is necessary to change this whole structure.

Is this true?
Some five years ago, during the coronation of Nicholas II, the masses in Moscow were promised a free treat of wine, beer, and lunch. The masses moved toward the place where the food was distributed, and a crush ensued. Those in front were knocked off their feet by those who were behind them, and these, in their turn, were pushed by those still farther back, and all, without seeing what was going on in front, pushed and crushed one another. The feeble were knocked off their feet by those who were stronger, and then the stronger people themselves, jammed in and suffocating, fell and were trampled upon by those who were behind them and could not arrest the motion. Thus several thousand people, old and young, men and women, were crushed to death.

When all was over, people began to reflect as to who was to blame for it. Some said that the police were to blame. Others said that the managers were to blame. Others again said that the czar was to blame for having invented this stupid kind of a celebration. All, but themselves, were blamed. And yet it would seem clear that only those were to blame who, to be the first to get a handful of cakes and a beaker of wine, rushed forward without paying any attention to any one else, and pushed and crushed the others.

Does not the same happen with the working people? The working people are worn out, crushed, and turned into slaves, only because they themselves ruin their lives and those of their brothers for the sake of insignificant advantages. The working people complain of the landowners, the government, the manufacturers, and the army.

But the landowners use the land, the government collects the taxes, the manufacturers dispose of the workmen, and the army suppresses the strikes, only because the working people not only aid the landowners, the government, the manufacturers, and the army, but themselves do all that of which they complain. If a landowner is able to use thousands hectares of land without working it himself, he does so only because the working people go and work for him and serve as his janitors, outriders, and clerks for their own meager advantage. In the same way the taxes are collected by the government from the working people, only because the working people, with an eye to a salary, which is collected from them, become elders, tax collectors, policemen, customs agents, and border guards – thus aiding the government to do what they complain of. Again the working people complain that the manufacturers lower the wages and make the men work longer and ever longer hours. But this, too, is done only because the working people knock down one another’s wages and hire out to the manufacturers as receivers, superintendents, janitors, and chief workmen, and for their masters’ advantage search, fine, and in every way oppress their brothers.

Finally, the working people complain that the army is sent out against them when they want to take possession of the land which they consider their own, or do not pay the taxes, or arrange strikes. But the army consists of soldiers, and the soldiers are the same working people who, some from advantage, others from fear, enter military service and make a promise under oath which is contrary both to their consciences and to the divine law recognized by them: that they will kill all those whom the authorities shall order them to kill.

Thus all the calamities of the working people are caused by themselves. They need only stop aiding the rich and the government, and all their calamities will be destroyed of themselves.

Why, then, do they continue to do what ruins them?
Two thousand years ago, people began to be acquainted with God’s law, which says that it is necessary to treat others as we would have others treat us, or, as this is expressed by the Chinese sage Confucius, “Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you.”

This law is simple and comprehensible to every man, and obviously gives the greatest good accessible to men. And so it would seem that, as soon as men have learned this law, they ought immediately to carry it out to the best of their ability, and ought to use all their forces for the purpose of teaching this law to the younger generations and familiarizing them with its execution.

Thus, it would seem, all people ought to have acted long ago, since this law was almost simultaneously expressed by Confucius, by the Jewish sage Hillel, and by Christ. Especially the men of our Christian world, it would seem, ought to have acted thus, since they recognize as the chief divine revelation that Gospel in which it says directly that this is the whole Law and the Prophets, that is, all the teaching which men need.

Meanwhile, almost two thousand years have passed, and men, far from executing this law themselves and teaching it to their children, for the most part do not know it themselves, or, if they know it, consider it to be unnecessary or impracticable. At first this seems strange, but when one considers how people lived before the discovery of this law, how long they lived thus, and how incompatible this law is with the life of humanity as it is presently constituted, one begins to understand why this has happened.

This happened because, while men did not know the law that, for the good of all men, each ought to do to others what he wished that others should do to him, each man tried for his advantage to have as much power over other men as possible. Having seized such power, each man, to be able to enjoy it without molestation, was compelled in his turn to submit to those who were stronger than he, and to aid them. These stronger ones, in their turn, had to submit to those who were still stronger, and to aid them.

Thus, in those societies that did not know the law that we ought to treat others as we wish that others should treat us, a small number of men always ruled all the rest. And so it is comprehensible that, when this law was revealed to men, the small number of men who ruled the rest not only did not wish to accept this law, but could not even wish that people over whom they ruled should learn of it and accept it.

The small number of ruling people have always known full well that their power is based on those over whom they rule being constantly at war with each other, each trying to make the others submit to him. And so they have always employed all means at their command in order to conceal the existence of this law from their subjects.

They do not conceal this law by denying it. That, indeed, would be impossible, since the law is clear and simple. Instead, they put forth hundreds and thousands of other laws, recognizing them as more important and obligatory than the law about doing to others what one would want others to do to oneself.

Some of these people, the priests, preach hundreds of church dogmas, rites, sacrificial ceremonies, and prayers, which have nothing in common with the law about doing to others what one would want others to do to oneself, and giving them out as the most important laws of God, the non-performance of which leads to eternal perdition.
Others, the rulers, accepting the doctrine invented by the priests and regarding it as the law, on its basis establish governmental decrees that are directly opposed to the law of mutuality, and demand that all men shall perform them under the threat of punishment.

Others again, the learned and the rich, who do not recognize God or any of His obligatory laws, teach that there is only science and its laws, which they, the learned, reveal and which the rich already know. All the people think that, to fare well, it is necessary by means of schools, lectures, theatres, concerts, galleries, and assemblies to acquire the same idle life which the learned and the rich live, and that then all that evil from which the working people suffer will come to an end of its own accord.

Neither of these denies the law itself, but side by side with it they put forth such a mass of theological, governmental, and scientific laws that, amidst them, the clear and all-accessible law of God, the fulfillment of which indubitably liberates the majority of men from their sufferings, becomes imperceptible and even entirely disappears.

It is this that has produced the remarkable fact that the working people, who are crushed by the governments and by the rich, continue generation after generation to ruin their lives and the lives of their brothers. Having recourse, for the sake of alleviating their condition, to the most complicated, cunning, and difficult of means, such as prayers, sacrificial ceremonies, the humble execution of governmental demands, unions, savings banks, assemblies, strikes, and revolutions, they fail to have recourse to the one means, the fulfillment of the law of God, which certainly frees them from all their calamities.

Those who are used to the intricacy and confusion of the theological, governmental, and scientific considerations will ask, “But is it possible that such simple and short an utterance, as the one that men must act toward others as they wish that others should act toward them, contains the whole law of God and all the guidance necessary for human life?” To such people it appears that the law of God and the guidance of human life must be expressed in diffuse, complicated theories, and so cannot be expressed in such a short and simple utterance.

Indeed, the law about doing to others what we would want others to do to us is very brief and very simple, but it is this very brevity and simplicity that show that this law is true, indubitable, eternal, and good. It is a law of God, worked out by a millennial life of the whole of humanity, and not the production of one man or of one circle of men, which calls itself the church, the state, or science.

Theological reflections about the fall of the first man, his redemption, and the second advent, scientific treatises about parliaments and supreme power, theories regarding punishment, property, and values, the classification of the sciences, natural selection, and so forth may be very astute and profound, but are always accessible to only a small number of men. But the law about treating other people as we would want others to treat us is accessible to all men, without distinction of race, faith, culture, or even age.

Besides, theological, governmental, and scientific reflections, which are regarded as the truth in one place and at one time, are regarded as a lie in another place and at another time. But the law about treating others as we would want others to treat us is regarded as true wherever it is known, and never ceases to be the truth for those who have once learned it.
But the chief difference between this law and all other laws, and its chief advantage, is that all the theological, governmental, and scientific laws not only do not pacify people and give them the good, but also frequently cause the greatest enmity and sufferings.

But the law about doing to others what we would want others to do to us, or about not doing to others what we would not want others to do to us, can produce nothing but peace and goodness. And so the deductions from this law are infinitely beneficial and varied, defining all possible relations of men among themselves, and everywhere putting concord and mutual service in the place of discord and struggle. If only men, having freed themselves from the deceptions which conceal this law from them, would recognize its obligatoriness and would work out all its applications to life, there would appear that science, now absent, but common to all men and most important in the world, which would show how all conflicts, both of separate individuals among themselves and between separate individuals and society, are to be settled on the basis of this law. If this now lacking science were established and worked out, and if all adults and all children were taught it, as now they are taught harmful superstitions and frequently useless and harmful sciences, the whole life of men would be changed, and so would all those grievous conditions in which the vast majority of them now live.

In biblical tradition it says that God gave His law to men long before Jesus gave us the law about not doing to others what we do not want others to do to us. In this law there was the commandment, “You shall not kill.” This commandment was, for its time, as significant and as fruitful as the later commandment about doing to others what we would want others to do to us, but it suffered the same fate as this later commandment did. It was not directly rejected by men, but, like the later commandment of mutuality, it was lost amidst other rules and precepts, which were recognized as of equal or even greater importance than the law of the inviolability of human life. If there were but this one commandment, and Moses had brought down on the tables as the only law of God nothing but the few words, “You shall not kill,” men ought to have recognized the obligatoriness of fulfilling this law, for which no other obligation could be substituted. And if men had recognized this law as the chief and only law of God, and had carried it out strictly, as they now carry out the celebration of the Sabbath, the worship of the images, communion, the non-eating of pork, and so forth, the whole of the human life would have been changed. There would be no possibility for war, or slavery, or the rich men’s seizure of the land of the poor, or the possession of the products of labor by the ruling class, because all this is based only on the possibility or on the threat of murder.

Thus it would be if the law, “You shall not kill,” were recognized as the only law of God. But when, on a par with this law, they recognized commandments about the Sabbath and pronouncing God’s name as equally important, there naturally arose new decrees of the priests, which were also recognized as equally important. The one greatest law of God, “You shall not kill,” which changed the whole life of men, was drowned among them, and not only did it become not always obligatory, but there were also found cases when it was possible to act quite contrary to it, so that this law has not even to this day received the significance which it deserves.

The same happened with the law about acting toward others as we would want others to act toward us.

Thus, the chief evil from which men suffer has for a long time not consisted in them not knowing God’s true law, but in men, to whom the knowledge and the execution of the true law is
inconvenient, being unable to destroy or overthrow it, inventing “precept upon precept and rule upon rule,” as Isaiah says, and giving them out as equally obligatory as, or even more obligatory than the true laws of God. And so, the only thing that is needed now for freeing men from their sufferings is freeing them from all the theological, governmental, and scientific reflections that are proclaimed to be obligatory laws of life. Once freed, they should naturally recognize God’s law as more binding upon them than all the other precepts and laws. God’s true, eternal law is already known to them and gives, not only to a few, but to all men, the greatest possible good in social life.

“But,” some will say, “no matter how correct the law about doing to others what we would them to do to us may be in itself, it cannot be applied to all cases in life. If men recognize this law to be always binding, without any exceptions whatever, and they will be compelled to recognize as inadmissible the use of any violence by any set of men upon any other, since no one wants any violence to be used against him. But the individual cannot be made safe without the use of violence over some people, property cannot be protected, the country cannot be defended, the existing order cannot be maintained.”

God says to men, “In order that you may everywhere and always be well off, fulfill my law about doing to others what you would want them to do to you.” But men who established a certain order in England, Germany, France, or Russia say, “Suppose we should fare worse, if we fulfilled the law given to us by God?”

We accept a law that is made by an assembly of men, no matter how strange it may be and by what bad men it may be made, and we are not afraid to fulfill it. But we are afraid to fulfill the law that is not only in agreement with reason and conscience, but which is also directly expressed in the book that we accept as God’s revelation, as though saying, “Suppose something bad should result from it, or that it should lead to disorder.”

Is it not obvious that the men who speak and think this way are not speaking of order, but of that disorder in which they live and which is advantageous for them? Order is, in their opinion, a state in which they are able to feast on other people, but disorder is that state when the people devoured wish that men should stop devouring them.

Such considerations only show that the men who belong to the small number of the ruling class feel, for the most part unconsciously, that the recognition of the law about doing to others what we would want them to do to us, and its fulfillment by men, not only destroys their advantageous social position, but also reveals all their immorality and cruelty. These people cannot think differently.

But it is time for the working people, who are driven off the land, crushed under taxes, driven to convict labor in factories, changed into slave soldiers, who torture themselves and their brothers, to understand that only the belief in the law of God and its fulfillment will free them from their sufferings.

The non-fulfillment of this law and the ever-increasing calamities resulting from it urge them to it. It is time for the laboring people to understand that their salvation lies only in that they need simply to begin to fulfill the law of mutuality in order for their situation to at once be improved. And it will be improved in proportion as the number of men shall increase, who act toward others as they would want others to act toward them.
And this is not mere words, nor abstract reflections, like the religious, governmental, socialistic, and scientific theories, but an actual means of liberation.

The theological, governmental, and scientific reflections and promises afford good to the working people, some in the world to come, and others in this world, but at such a distant future that the bones of those who live and suffer now will long ago have rotted. But the fulfillment of the law about doing to others what we would want others to do to us immediately and incontestably improves the condition of the working people.

Even if all the working people did not see clearly that, by working on the lands of the capitalists and in their factories, they give the capitalists the chance of using the products of the labors of their brothers, and thus violate the law of mutuality – or, if they saw it and through want did not have the strength to decline such work – the refraining from such work, even by a few, would embarrass the capitalists and would at once improve the general condition of the working people. The refraining from a direct participation in the activity of the capitalists and the government in the capacity of overseers, clerks, tax collectors, customs agents, and so forth – occupations that are obviously opposed to the law of mutuality – would even more improve the condition of the working people, even if all should not be able to abstain from such an activity.

And the refusal of the working people to take part in the army, which has murder for its aim – an act most opposed to the law of mutuality – and which of late has been more and more frequently directed against the laborers, would absolutely change the position of the working people for the better.

God’s law is not God’s law because, as the priests always assert in regard to their laws, it was enunciated by God himself in a miraculous way, but because it faultlessly and obviously points out to men that path which, if they travel upon it, will certainly free them from their sufferings and will give them the greatest internal (spiritual) and external (physical) good, and this will be attained not by a chosen few, but by all men without any exception.

Such is the law of God about treating others as we would want others to treat us. It shows to people that, fulfilling it, they will certainly receive the inner, spiritual good of the consciousness of agreement with the will of God and of the increase of love in themselves and in others. At the same time, they will receive the greatest certain good accessible to them in social life, and they certainly make their condition worse in departing from it.

Indeed, it is obvious to every man who does not take part in the struggle of men among themselves, but who observes life from without, that the people who struggle among themselves act precisely like gamblers who give up their certain, though insignificant, property for the very doubtful possibility of its increase. Whether a working man who underbids his companions, or who goes to work for the rich, or who enters military service will improve his condition is as doubtful as whether the gambler will win in putting up his stake.

There can be thousands of casualties by which his condition will remain such as it is, or even get worse than it is. But it is unquestionable that his agreement to work for smaller wages or his readiness to serve the capitalists and the government will make the condition of all the working people, and his with theirs, slightly worse – and this is as unquestionable as that the gambler will certainly lose the stake which he risks.

For a man who does not take part in the struggle, but who observes life, it is obvious that just as in games of chance, in lotteries, and in the stock exchange it is only the keepers of the
gambling-houses, lotteries, and brokers’ offices who get rich, while all players get ruined, so also in life it is the governments, the rich, and in general the oppressors, who become enriched. All the working people who, in the hope of improving their situation, depart from the law of mutuality only make the situation of all working people worse, and consequently their own situation together with the rest.

God’s law is God’s law because it defines man’s position in the world, showing him that better thing which he can do while in this position, both for his spiritual and for his carnal life.

“Therefore take no thought,” it says in the Gospel in explanation of this law, “saying, ‘What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?’ Your heavenly Father knows that you need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you.” These are not mere words, but the explanation of man’s true position in the world.

If a man only does what God wants of him, and fulfils His law, God, too, will do for him everything that he needs. Thus the law about doing to others what we would want them to do to us refers to God as well. For Him to do to us what we would want Him to do to us, we must do for Him what He wants us to do. What He wants us to do is that we should treat others as we would want them to treat us. The only difference is that what He wants of us He does not need for Himself, but for ourselves, giving us the highest attainable good.

The working people most purify themselves, in order that the governments and the rich should stop devouring them. The itch develops only on a dirty body, and feeds on that body only so long as it is dirty. And so, for the working people to free themselves from their wretchedness, there is but one means: to purify themselves. But to purify themselves, they must free themselves from theological, governmental, and scientific superstitions, and believe in God and His law.

In this does the one means of salvation lie.

Take an educated and a simple, unlettered working man. Both are full of indignation against the existing order of things. The educated working man does not believe in God or in His law, but knows Marx and Lassale, watches the activity of a Bebel or a Jaurès in the parliaments, and delivers fine speeches about the injustice of the seizure of land, the implements of labor, the hereditary transmission of property, and so forth.

The unlettered working man, though he does not know any theories and believes in the Trinity, redemption, and so forth, is also provoked against the landowners and capitalists, and considers the whole existing order to be wrong. But give a working man, either an educated or an uneducated one, the chance of improving his situation by producing some articles cheaper than others (though this may ruin tens, hundreds, or thousands of his brothers), or the chance of taking a job with a rich man that gives him a big salary, or the chance of buying land and starting an establishment with hired labor, and nine hundred ninety-nine out of every thousand will do so without hesitation. They will even defend their agrarian rights and the rights of employers with even more zeal than landowners and capitalists who are born into their positions.

But that their participation in murder, that is, in military service or in the taxes that are intended for the support of the army, is not only a morally bad act, but also very pernicious for their brothers and for themselves – the same which forms the foundation of their slavery – does
not enter the heads of any of them. All either gladly pay their taxes for the army, or themselves enter the army, considering such an act to be quite natural.

Could such people have led to the formation of a different society from that which now exists? The working people find the cause of their condition in the greed and cruelty of the landowners, capitalists, and violators. But all, or nearly all, working people, without faith in God and His law, are just such landowners, capitalists, and violators, though much smaller and less successful.

A village lad, being in want of earnings, comes to the city, to a peasant of his own village who is acting as coachman at the house of a rich merchant, and asks the coachman to find a job for him at lower wages than what is customary. The village lad is prepared to take such a job. Upon arriving the next morning, he accidentally hears in the servants’ room the complaints of an old man who has lost his position, and who does not know what to do next. The lad is sorry for the old man, and he refuses the position, because he does not want to do to another man what he does not want another man to do to him. Or a peasant, with a large family, accepts the well-paid position of steward on the estate of a rich and strict landowner. The new steward feels that his family is provided for, and is glad to take the job, but, upon beginning his duties, he has to punish the peasants for permitting their horses to graze in their master’s fields, catch the women who are collecting firewood in their proprietor’s forest, lower the wages of the laborers, and make them exert their last bit of strength in work. The steward who has taken this new position feels that his conscience does not permit him to perform these duties, so he gives up his position and, in spite of the reproaches and complaints of his family, does something else, which gives him much less of an income. Or again, a soldier is brought with a company against some rioting laborers and is commanded to shoot at them. He refuses to obey, and for this suffers cruel torments. All these men act so because the evil which they do to others is visible to them, and their hearts tell them outright that what they are doing is contrary to the law of God about not doing to another what we would not want others to do to us.

But when the working man reduces the price of his labor and does not see those to whom he does wrong, the evil that he causes his brothers through it is not diminished thereby. And when a working man goes over to the side of the masters, and does not see or feel the harm that he does to his own, the harm nonetheless remains. The same is true of a man who enters military service and who prepares himself, if necessary, to kill his brothers. If, when he learns to shoot and to stab upon entering military service, he does not yet see whom and how he is going to kill, he must understand that he will have to kill people someday.

And so, for the working people to free themselves from their oppression and slavery, they must nurture in themselves a religious feeling that forbids everything that makes the general welfare of their brothers worse, even though this deterioration may not be perceptible to them. Just as people now abstain from eating meat on fast-days and from working on Sundays, they must religiously abstain, in the first place, from working for capitalists, if they can get along at all without doing so; in the second place, from offering to do work at less than the established wage; thirdly, from improving their condition by passing over to the side of the capitalists by serving them; and, fourthly, above all else, from participation in governmental violence, be it police, customs, or general military service.

Only by such a religious relation to the form of their activity can the working people be freed from their enslavement.

If a laborer is prepared to join the organized murderers (soldiers) from advantage or fear, without feeling the slightest compunction; if, for the increase of his well-being, he is prepared
calmly to deprive his needy brother of his earnings; if he is prepared to go over to the side of the oppressors, by helping them in their activity, for the sake of a salary – he has no cause for complaint. No matter what his condition may be, he creates it himself and cannot himself be anything but an oppressed man or an oppressor.

Nor can it be different. So long as a man does not believe in God and His law, he cannot help but desire to get for himself in his short life as much good as possible, independently of what consequences this may have for others. And as soon as all men wish for themselves as much good as possible, independent of what this will do to others, no matter what order may be introduced, all men will form themselves into a pyramid, the apex of which will be the rulers, and the base of which will be the oppressed.

In the Gospel it says that Christ pitied men for being exhausted and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. What would He feel and say now, if He saw men not only exhausted and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd, but billions of men in the whole world, generation after generation, ruining themselves in beastly labor, stupefaction, ignorance, vices, killing and tormenting one another, in spite of the fact that the means of freeing oneself from all these calamities was given two thousand years ago?

The key that unlocks the chain that fetters the working masses is placed near them, and they needs only take the key, open the chain, and be free. But the laboring people have not been doing this. They either undertake nothing and surrender themselves to gloom, or wound their shoulders in tugging at the chain, in the hope of breaking what is unbreakable. Or, what is still worse, like a chained animal that rushes against him who wants to free it, they attack those who show them the key that unlocks their chain.

This key is belief in God and His law.

Only when men will reject those superstitions in which they are carefully brought up; only when men will believe that the law about treating others as they would want to be treated is the chief law of God for our time; only when men will believe this law as they now believe in the celebration of the Sabbath, the observance of fasts, the necessity of divine services and communion, the fivefold prayers, or the fulfillment of the oath, and so forth; only when men, believing in this, will fulfill this law before any other laws and precepts – only then will the slavery and the wretched condition of the working people be destroyed.

And so the working people themselves must first of all, without respect for the old habits and traditions, without fearing the external persecutions from church and state and the internal struggle with their relatives, with boldness and determination free themselves from the false faith in which they are educated. They must more and more elucidate to themselves and to others, especially to the younger generations and to children, the true essence of faith in God and of the law of mutuality that results from it, and follow it to the best of their ability, though this following may result in temporary discomfiture.

This is how the working people themselves must act.

But the men of the ruling minority, who, making use of the labors of the working people, have acquired all the advantages of culture and so are able clearly to see the deceptions in which they keep the working people. If they truly wish to serve the working people, they must first of all, with their example and by their words, try to free the working people from those religious and governmental deceptions in which they are entrapped. They must not do what they are
doing now, when, by leaving in force, supporting, and even strengthening these deceptions with their example, especially the chief deceptions – the religious deceptions – they offer ineffective and even injurious solutions, which not only do not free the working people from their wretchedness, but even make their condition worse and worse.

No one can tell, whether this will ever or anywhere be realized, but one thing is certain: this means can free a vast number of men – all working people – from their humiliations and sufferings.

There is and there can be no other means.

_Yásnaya Polyána, July 12, 1901_

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