

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Why the Christians are in such distress now

Leo Tolstoy

1907

People peacefully live and act in accordance with each other only when they are connected by the same system of beliefs: when they equally understand the goal and the purpose of their activity.

This is true for families, and for different circles of people, and for political parties, and for entire dynasties, and it is especially true for the people united into states.

People of one nation live more or less peacefully among themselves, and together defend their common interests only while they live by one and the same ideology, recognized by all people of the nation. Common for all people ideology is usually expressed by the religion, established in the nation.

That's how it always was in pagan antiquity, and it is here and now, - in both pagan and Mohammedan people, and is seen with especial clarity - in the most ancient and still continuing to exist the same peaceful and consonant life of the people of China. That's what it was among the so-called Christian people. These people were intrinsically connected by the religion which was called Christian.

Leo Tolstoy
Why the Christians are in such distress now
1907

Original text from RevoltLib.com, 2021.

theanarchistlibrary.org

This religion contained a very unwise and internally contradictory union of the most basic and eternal truths about human life with the most gross requirements of pagan life. But no matter how crude that connection was, it, covered in solemn forms, for long time satisfied the moral and mental requirements of European people.

But the further the life progressed, the more people educated themselves, the more apparent and obvious the internal contradiction of this religion became, - it being groundless, unsound, and useless. So it lasted for centuries and nowadays has reached the point when this religion survives only by inertia, no longer accepted by anybody, and does not fulfill the main inherent to a religion external influence on people: connecting people by a single ideology in one common to all understanding of the destination and the purpose of life.

Before the religious doctrine was breaking apart into different sects, and the sects fiercely defended each own understanding, and now this is no longer the case. Even if there are various sects among the various lovers of a word exchange, no one is seriously interested in these sects. The whole mass of the people - from scientists themselves, and up to the most uneducated workers - do not believe, not only in that Christian religion which once moved people, but they do not believe in any religion, and they believe that the concept of religion itself is something outdated and unnecessary. Educated people believe in science, socialism, anarchism, progress. Uneducated people believe in rituals, in the church service, in Sunday inactivity, but they believe in them as in tradition, decency; there is absolutely no faith as faith that connects people, drives them, or only its disappearing remnants left.

The weakening of faith, its replacement, or rather overshadowing of it - by both superstitious traditions for the masses and rationalistic interpretation of the pillars of faith by higher academic classes - occurs everywhere: in Brahmanism and in Confucianism, and in Buddhism, and in Mohammedism; yet

there is nowhere such complete liberation of people from religion as it has happened and is happening with extraordinary speed in Christianity.

Overshadowing of the fundamentals of faith by superstitious interpretations and traditions is common phenomena to all religions. Common causes of overshadowing of the foundations of faith are, firstly, and most importantly, that it is always people who don't understand it want to interpret a teaching, and by means of their interpretations they distort and weaken it; secondly, the majority looks for visible forms of manifestation of the teaching and translates the spiritual meaning of a teaching into the material one; thirdly, common to all religions, the distortions of religious foundations of teachings for the sake of the benefits of priests and ruling classes.

All these three reasons of the perversions of religions are common to all religious teachings, and have distorted the teachings of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Mohammedism; but these reasons have not destroyed faith in these teachings. And the people of Asia, despite the perversions which undermined these teachings, continue to believe in them and are connected among themselves and defend their independence. Only one, so-called Christian, religion has lost its necessity for people professing it, and ceased to be a religion. Why is this? What special causes have produced this strange phenomenon?

The reason for this is that the so-called Church-Christian doctrine is not intact, emerged from a sermon of one great teacher – a teaching such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, - but is only falsification of the true doctrine of a great teacher, having almost nothing in common with the true teaching, except for the name of the founder and some not connected by anything proclamations borrowed from the main teaching.

I know that what I have to express now - that the Church religion, which was preached for centuries and is still preached to millions of people under the name of Christianity, is nothing

but a very vulgar Jewish sect, having nothing in common with true Christianity – will sound to people who verbally profess the teaching of this sect not only unbelievable, but the top of the greatest blasphemy.

But I cannot not to say that. I cannot not to say that because for people to take advantage of the great blessing which the true Christian teaching gives us, we must first free ourselves from that incoherent, false and, most importantly, deeply-immoral doctrine, which has concealed from us the true Christian doctrine. This teaching, which has hid from us the teaching of Christ, is the teaching of Paul, expressed in his Epistles, which became the basis of the Church's teaching. This teaching isn't only not the teaching of Christ, but is the teaching directly opposite to it.

It's enough only to read the Gospels, ignoring anything that has an imprint of superstitious inserts made by writers - such as the miracle of Cana in Galilee, resurrections, healings, expulsion of demons, and the resurrection of Christ - but sticking to that what is simple, clear, understandable, and interconnected by one and the same idea, - and then read at least those Paul's Epistles which are recognized the best, to clearly see that complete disagreement, which cannot be avoided, between the worldwide eternal teaching of a simple holy man Jesus with practically temporary, local, obscure, convoluted, stilted, and adapting to the existing evil the teaching of Pharisee Paul.

While the meaning of Christ's teaching (just like anything truly great) is simple, clear, accessible to all and can be expressed in one word: a human is a son of God, - the essence of Paul's teaching is artificial, dark, and totally incomprehensible for any free of hypnosis person.

The essence of Christ's teaching is that the true well-being of a human is in the fulfillment of the will of the Father. And the will of the Father is in the unity of people. And therefore the award for the fulfillment of the will of the Father is the fulfillment itself, the merging with the Father. The award now

on this law, in love with other people, but without defining in ahead of a certain social order of people.

The social order of life for all people will be good only when people won't care about this structure, but would only care about having each of them, before their own consciousness, fulfilled a requirement of their faith. Only then there will be the best social structure, not invented, but that which must be, according to the faith confessed by people and the laws which they fulfill.

Such faith exists in the pure Christianity, along with all the teachings of the wise people of antiquity and the East.

And I think the time has come now for this faith, and that the best thing a person can do nowadays is to follow the teaching of this faith and to promote its spread among people.

is in the acknowledgment of the unity with the will of the Father. This acknowledgment gives the highest joy and freedom. It is only possible to reach it by raising the spirit in oneself, by shifting life into the spiritual life.

The essence of the teaching of Paul is that Christ's death and resurrection saves people from their sins and cruel punishments intended by God to people currently living for the sins of their predecessors.

While the foundation of Christ's teaching in that the main and the only obligation of a human is the fulfillment of God's will, that is to love people, - the single foundation of Paul's teaching is: that the only human obligation is to believe that Christ, by his death, has atoned for and redeemed the sins of people.

While according to Christ's teaching the reward for shifting one's own life to the spiritual essence of each person is joyful freedom of the awareness of the connection with God, and according to Paul's teaching the reward for the good life is not here but in the future, in the post mortem state. According to Paul's teaching, one needs to live the good life chiefly in order to get a reward for it "there". With its usual illogicality, he says, as a proof of existence of the afterlife blessings: "If we don't live a life of debauchery and if we deprive ourselves of the pleasure of doing mean things here, and if there is no reward in the future life, then we will get fooled."

Yes, the foundation of Christ's teaching - truth, its meaning - the purpose of life. The foundation of Paul's teaching - cunningness and fantasy.

Out of these different foundations naturally even more different conclusions are derived.

Where Christ says that people should not wait for rewards and punishments in the future and should, as workers of the master, understand their purpose, and fulfill it, - the whole teaching of Paul is based on the fear of punishment and the promises of rewards, on the ascension into heaven, or on the

most immoral statement that if you believe, then you will get rid of sins, become sinless.

Where in the Gospel the equality of all people is recognized, and is stated that what is significant before people, is abomination before God, but Paul teaches obedience to authorities, recognizing the establishment of them from God, so that the one who opposes the authorities, he opposes the godly establishment.

Where Christ teaches that a person should always forgive, Paul calls for anathema to those who does not do what he commands, and advises to give drink and to feed the hungry enemy so that by this act to collect hot coals on the head of the enemy, and asks God to punish Alexander the Coppersmith for some personal disagreements with him.

The Gospel says that all people are equal; Paul recognizes slaves and tells them to obey their masters. Christ says: do not swear at all and give to Cesar only what is Cesar's, and what is God's - your soul - give to nobody. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher authorities: for there is no power other than from God; the existing powers are ordained of God". (Romans 13, 1-2)

Christ says: "Who takes the sword will perish from the sword." Paul says: "The master is a minister of God, for your own good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he carries the sword not in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil." (Romans 13, 4)

Christ says: "The sons of God don't owe anybody to pay taxes." (Matthew 17, 25-26) Paul says "For this you pay your tribute: for they are God's ministers, consistently employed in doing this. And therefore give to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." (Romans 13, 6-7).

But not only these opposite teachings of Christ and Paul show the incompatibility of the great worldwide teaching, which has clarified that what was expressed by all the greatest

its, not just grandeur, but in all its compulsion for any person possessing the reason.

Just like a ready to crystallize liquid is awaiting a jolt to turn into crystals, the same way the Christian humanity was only waiting for a push so that all its vague Christian aspirations, silenced by false teachings and in particular by the superstition about the possibility of mankind to live without religion, would be turned into reality, and this push almost simultaneously is given to us by the awakening of Eastern people and the revolution among the Russian people, more than anybody else holding in itself the spirit of true Christianity, and not the Paul's Christianity.

The reason why the Christian people in general, and the Russian people in particular, are now in such distress, - is that people have not only lost the only necessary for the peaceful, agreeable, and happy cohabitation of people condition: belief in the same principles of life and in common to all people laws of actions, - not only deprived of the chief condition of good life, but also stagnate in gross superstition about possibility for people to live a good life without faith.

The salvation from this situation is only: in recognition that if the perversion of the Christian faith was the perversion of the faith and should be rejected, then the faith that had been corrupted is single, the most necessary truth of our time, perceived by all people, not only of Christian, but also of Eastern world, and the following of which gives people, each separately and all people collectively, not distressful, but consonant and good life.

The salvation is not to make an arrangement of lives invented by us for other people - as people without faith understand this salvation now, each in their own way: some in parliamentarism, others Republic, socialism, anarchism - but to understand one and the same by all people, each for their own self, of the meaning of life and its law, and to live based

People by their own life experience will be brought to the need to understand that without religion people have never lived nor can live; that if they are alive now, it is only because the remains of religion are still alive among them; they'll realize that wolves, rabbits can live without religion, but a human, who has reason, such an instrument which gives him huge power, - if he lives without religion, obeying his animal instincts, he becomes the most horrible beast, especially harmful to his own kind.

This is what people inevitably will understand, and are already beginning to understand now, after the terrible disasters that they are causing and preparing to cause to themselves. People will understand that they cannot live in society without one connecting them common understanding of life. And this common, which connects all the people, understanding life is vaguely carried in the minds of all Christian world partly because it is inherent to human consciousness in general, and partly because this understanding of life is expressed in the teaching which was perverted, but the essence of which has penetrated even through the perversion.

Just need to understand that everything, on which our world stands, everything that is good in it, all the unity of people, which is to say, all the ideals that are carried by people: socialism, anarchism, all of this - is nothing more than a private demonstration of the true religion that was hidden from us by Paul's and Church's doctrine (it was hidden, probably, because the conscience of the nations hasn't caught up yet to the true one) and to which the Christian humanity has now grew up.

People of our time and world does not need, as narrow minded and frivolous people think, so-called scientists, to invent any new bases of life that can connect all people, but only need to throw away all the perversions, which hide from us the true faith, and this faith, unified with all the reasonable fundamentals of faiths of mankind, will open before us in all

thinkers of Greece, Rome and the East, with small, sectarian, random, feverish sermon of an unenlightened, arrogant and pettily vane, boastful and cunning Jew. This incompatibility cannot be not obvious to everyone perceiving the essence of the great Christian teaching.

Meanwhile, a number of random reasons have resulted in that the miserable and deceitful teaching took place of the eternal and true teaching of Christ, and even concealed it from the consciousness of the majority of people for many centuries.

Although at all times among the Christian people there were people who understood the Christian teaching in its true meaning, but those were just the exceptions. The majority of so-called Christians, especially after the Church, with its power, has recognized all the writings of Paul, and even his advises to his pals on how to drink wine to recuperate stomach, as indisputable work of the Holy Spirit, the majority of people believed that this same immoral and convoluted and therefore pliable to the most arbitrary interpretations doctrine is the true teaching the God-Christ Himself.

There were many different reasons for this confusion.

The first was that Paul, just like all proud and vane preachers of lies, was fussing, running from place to place, recruited disciples, he was not squeamish about using any means to acquire them; while people who understood the true teaching just lived it and didn't rush to preach.

The second reason was that Epistles, which preached the doctrine of Paul under the name of Jesus Christ, due to Paul's hasty activity, became known before the Gospels (which was in the 50s, after the birth of Christ; the Gospels have appeared later).

The third reason was that the crude superstitious doctrine of Paul was more feasible to rough crowd who willingly accepted the new superstition, which replaced the old.

The fourth reason was that that this doctrine (no matter how false it was in regards to those fundamentals which it perverted), was still more reasonable than the coarse one

professed by the people of paganism, at the same time it did not disrupt the pagan forms of life, by allowing, just like paganism does, and justifying violence, executions, slavery. While the true teaching of Christ - by denying any violence, executions, slavery, wealth - was rooting out the whole way of pagan life.

The essence of the matter was the following.

In Galilee, Judaea, a great wise man, the teacher of life, has appeared, Jesus, named Christ. His teaching was composed of those eternal truths about human life, vaguely felt by all people and more or less clearly expressed by all great teachers of mankind: by Brahmin sages, by Confucius, Lao-Tze, Buddha. These truths were perceived by ordinary people surrounding Christ, and were more or less coincided with Jewish beliefs of that time, the main of which one was waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

The appearance of Christ with his teaching, changing the entire structure of the existing life, was taken by some as the fulfillment of prophecies about the Messiah. It's very possible that Christ himself more or less adjusted his eternal, universal teaching to casual, temporary religious forms of people for whom he preached. But, be that as it may, the teaching of Christ has attracted disciples, shook off people, and having spread more and more, became so unpleasant to Jewish authorities that they have executed Christ, and after his death persecuted, tormented, and killed his followers (Stephan and other). Executions, as always, have only strengthened the faith of the followers.

Tenacity and conviction of these followers apparently drew attention to themselves, and shocked one of the Pharisees-persecutors, named Saul. And this Saul, having received the name of Paul, a person very ambitious, erratic, hot, and slick, suddenly for some internal reasons, which we can only guess about, instead of his former activity directed against the disciples of Christ, got determined, by taking advantage of

pletely hides from people that true teaching, the only one that gives unquestionable and inalienable well-being to all people.

The main obstacle is that precisely because that the perversions of the false Christian teaching are too obvious, more and more gross superstition is lately spreading, many times more harmful than all ancient superstitions, the superstition that religion in general is something unnecessary, outdated, and that mankind can live a reasonable life without a religion.

This superstition is particularly inherent to narrow minded people. And because they are the majority of people in our time, this gross superstition is becoming more and more widely spread. These people, having in mind the very perversions of religion, imagine that religion in general is something outdated, outlived by humanity, and that now people have learned that they can live without religion, i.e. without answer to the question: why do people live, and what they, as rational beings, should be guided by.

This gross superstition is spread mainly by so-called scientists, i.e. people especially narrow minded and having lost their facility for original, reasonable thinking as a result of continuing studying of the thoughts of others and engaging with the most idle and irrelevant questions. But especially easily and readily this superstition is perceived by workers stupefied by automated urban production lines, whose number is growing more and more, in people considered to be the most enlightened, who are in fact the most lagged behind and corrupt people of our time.

In this further and further spreading superstition is the reason for the rejection of the true teaching of Christ. But in this spreading superstition is the reason that people will inevitably be brought to understand that the religion that they reject, imagining that it is the religion of Christ, is only the perversion of this religion, and that only true religion can save people from those disasters in which they are falling more and more, by living without religion.

the meaning of their life and points to the manifestation of this teaching in life, and empowers people to a peaceful and reasonable life.

This teaching is simple, clear, easy to implement, one for all people of the world, and not only does not controvert the teachings of Krishna, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius in their non-perverted forms, as well as of Socrates, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and all the wise men who understood common to all people single purpose of a human, and common to all, one and the same law in all teachings, following from the awareness of this purpose, - but confirms and clarifies them.

It would seem that it should be simple and easy for the suffering people to free themselves from that gross superstition, perverted Christianity, in which they lived and live, and assimilate the religious teaching which was perverted and which invariably produces complete satisfaction for both bodily and spiritual natures of human. But in the way of realizing it there are many various obstacles: the fact that the false doctrine was recognized as divine; and that it got so intertwined with the true teaching so that it is especially difficult to separate the false from the true; and that this hoax was consecrated by the tradition of antiquity, and that based on it quite a lot of cases committed that are considered good, which, after recognizing the true doctrine, should be regarded as shameful; and that based on the false teaching the lives of masters and slaves evolved, as a result of which it became possible to produce all those perceived benefits of material progress, which our humanity is so proud of; - and upon the establishing of the true Christianity all the largest part of these amenities must perish, because without slaves there will be nobody to make them.

And especially important obstacle is that the true teaching is unprofitable for the ruling people. The ruling people have the means, through both the false education and bribery, violence and hypnosis of adults, to spread the false doctrine that com-

the power of conviction which he met in the followers of Christ, to become the founder of the new religious sect, in the foundation of which he has put those very uncertain and unclear concepts that he had about the teaching of Christ, all Jewish Pharisaic beliefs intertwined with it, and, most importantly, his own speculations about the efficacy of faith which is supposed to save and to justify people.

Since that time, 50 years after the death of Christ, there started the intense preaching of this false Christianity, and in those 5-6 years were written first (later recognized as sacred) pseudo-Christian writings, namely the Epistles. The first Epistles defined totally wrong meaning of Christianity for the masses. When this false understanding of Christianity was established among most of the believers, the Gospels began to appear, which, especially the Matthew, were not solid works of one person, but collections of many depictions of the life and teaching of Christ. At the beginning, the Gospel of Mark has appeared, then of Matthew, Luke, and then John.

All these Gospels are not solid works, but all of them are compilations from various scriptures. For example, the Gospel of Matthew is basically a short Gospel of Jews, containing only sermon on the mountain. Still, the entire Gospel is composed of additions to it. The same is with other Gospels. All these Gospels (except for the main part of the Gospel of John), appeared after the Paul and more or less were adjusted to already existing Paul's teaching.

The true teaching of the great teacher, which has inspired Christ himself and his followers to die for it, has also prompted Paul to choose this teaching for his vain purposes; the true teaching, from its first steps, having been corrupted by Paul's perversion, got increasingly covered with a thick layer of superstitions, distortions, false understanding, and ended up with that the true teaching of Christ became unknown to the majority and completely replaced with the strange Church doctrine - with popes, bishops, miracles, icons, justifications by faith etc.,

which has nearly nothing to do with the true Christian teaching, except for the name.

That's how the true-Christian teaching relates to the Paul-Church doctrine, called Christian. The doctrine was false in regards to the teaching that has appeared to them; but no matter how false it was, it was still a step forward in comparison with the religious concepts of barbarian time of Constantine. And therefore Constantine and surrounding him people readily accepted this doctrine, being completely confident that this doctrine is the teaching of Christ. Having fallen in the hands of the rulers, this doctrine was becoming more and more crude and approached the worldview of the masses. There appeared the icons, statues, creatures of worshiping, and the people sincerely believed in this doctrine.

That's what is was in Byzantium and Rome. The same was in the Middle Ages, and part of the new – till the end of the 18th century, when people, so-called Christian people, have joined together in the name of this Church-Paul's faith which gave them, albeit very vulgar and having nothing to do with true Christianity, explanation and the destination of human life.

People had the religion, they believed in it, and therefore could live a consonant life, defending common interests.

This lasted for long time, and would have continued even now, if this church religion was an independent religious doctrine, as the doctrine of Brahmanism, Buddhism, as the teaching of Shinto, especially as the Chinese Confucius teaching, and was not a forgery of the teaching of Christianity, having no root by itself.

The further Christian mankind lived, than more education was spread, and as braver and braver there became, based on the perverted and recognized as infallible belief, both as secular and spiritual rulers, the more and more there were exposed the false proclamation of the perverted religion, all its groundlessness, and internal contradiction of the teaching recognizing

love as the basis of life and at the same time justifying wars and all kinds of violence.

Fewer and fewer people believed in the teaching, and the upshot was that all the vast majority of Christian people ceased to believe not only in this perverted doctrine, but also in any religious teaching shared by the majority of people. All have divided into countless, not faiths, but ideologies; as proverb says, all have spread around as blind puppies away from their mother, and now all the people of our Christian world with different ideologies and even faiths: monarchists, Socialists, Republicans, anarchists, spiritists, evangelists, etc., all of them are afraid of each other, hate each other.

I won't describe the distress, separation, anger of people of the Christian humanity. Everyone knows it. It is enough only to read the first paper you can get, whether the most conservative or the most revolutionary newspaper. Whoever lives in the Christian world, cannot fail to see that, no matter how bad the current situation of Christendom is now, what waits for it is even worse.

Mutual animosity is growing, and all patches, allegedly offered by both Governments and revolutionaries, Socialists, anarchists, cannot bring people - having before them no other purpose than their personal well-being, and therefore not being able not to be jealous of each other and hate each other - toward nothing else except toward all kind of external and internal fighting and toward the greatest disasters.

Salvation is neither in peace conferences nor pension offices, not in spiritism, evangelism, free Protestantism, socialism. Salvation is only in one: in recognition of only one such belief which can connect people of our time. And this faith exists, and there are a lot of people now who know it.

This faith is that teaching of Christ which was hidden from people by the false doctrine of Paul and by Church. It is enough to remove those veils that hide the truth from us, and it will open to us, that teaching of Christ which explains to people