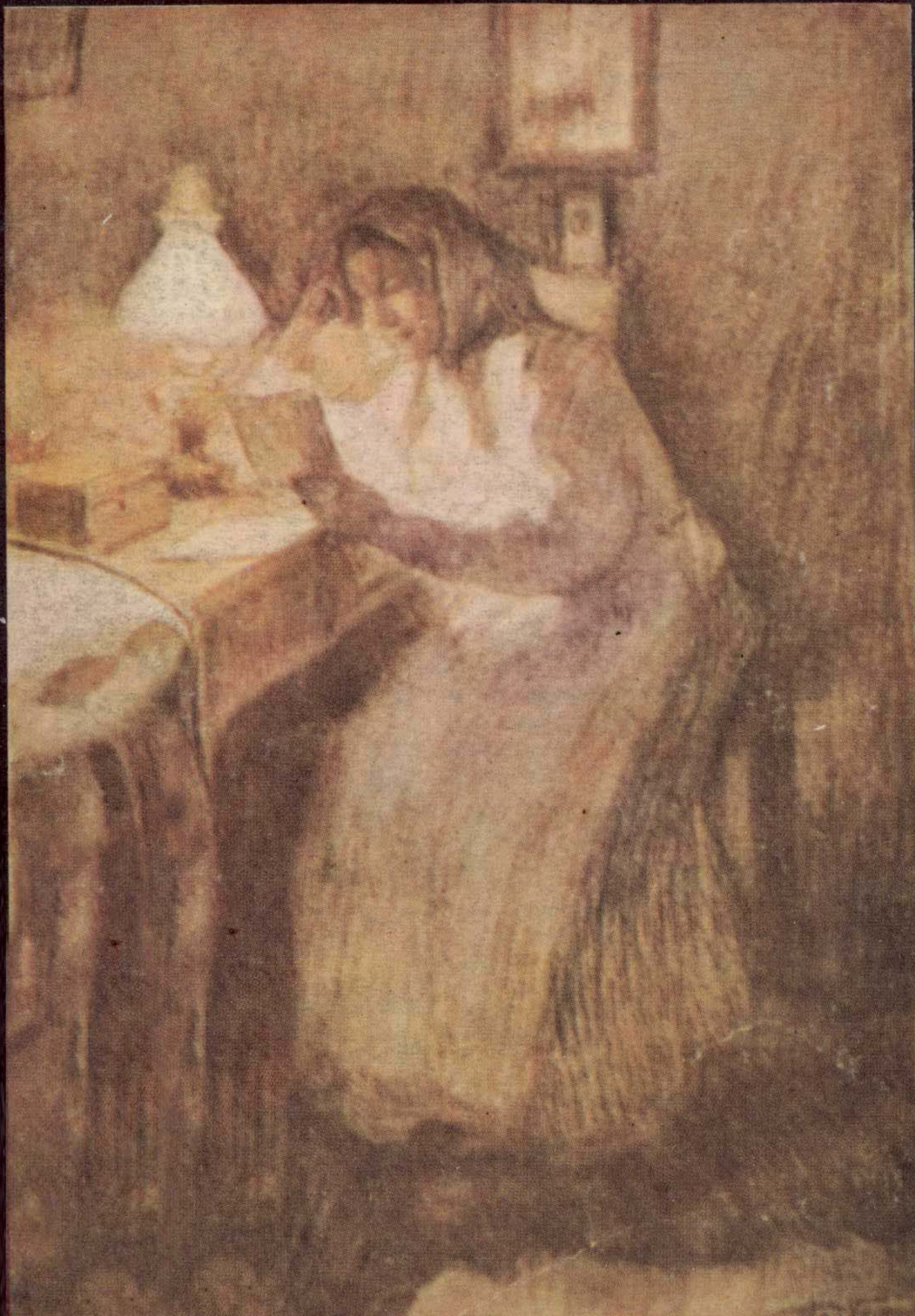


Penguin  Classics

TOLSTOY
RESURRECTION



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COUNT LEO NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOY was born in 1828 at Yasnaya Polyana in the Tula province, and educated privately. He studied Oriental languages and law at the University of Kazan then led a life of pleasure until 1851 when he joined an artillery regiment in the Caucasus. He took part in the Crimean war and after the defence of Sevastopol he wrote *The Sevastopol Stories*, which established his reputation. After a period in St Petersburg and abroad, where he studied educational methods for use in his school for peasant children in Yasnaya, he married Sophie Andreyevna Behrs in 1862. The next fifteen years was a period of great happiness; they had thirteen children, and Tolstoy managed his vast estates in the Volga Steppes, continued his educational projects, cared for his peasants and wrote *War and Peace* (1865-68) and *Anna Karenin* (1874-76). *A Confession* (1879-82) marked an outward change in his life and works; he became an extreme rationalist and moralist, and in a series of pamphlets after 1880 he expressed theories such as rejection of the state and church, indictment of the demands of the flesh, and denunciation of private property. His teachings earned him numerous followers in Russia and abroad, but also much opposition and in 1901 he was excommunicated by the Russian holy synod. He died in 1910, in the course of a dramatic flight from home, at the small railway station of Astapovo.

ROSEMARY EDMONDS was born in London and studied English, Russian, French, Italian and Old Church Slavonic at universities in England, France and Italy. During the war she was translator to General de Gaulle at Fighting France Headquarters in London and, after the liberation, in Paris. She went on to study Russian Orthodox Spirituality, and has translated Archimandrite Sophrony's *The Undistorted Image*. She has also translated Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *The Cossacks*, *Anna Karenin* and *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*; *The Queen of Spades* by Pushkin, and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, all for the Penguin Classics. Her other translations include works by Gogol and Leskov. She is at present working in Spanish, and researching into Old Church Slavonic texts.

L · N · TOLSTOY



RESURRECTION

TRANSLATED AND
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY
ROSEMARY EDMONDS

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INTRODUCTION

'I SHOULD like to live long, very long; and the thought of death fills me with a childlike, poetic alarm.'

So wrote Tolstoy in his youth. But when he was verging on the age of fifty and, like Job before the time of testing, had nothing left to wish for, the poetic alarm turned all at once to panic fear as he stared into the black void – the *gouffre* which Pascal called the eternal framework of our transitory existence. 'Life stood still and grew sinister' is how he formulated the onslaught of his spiritual crisis.

The next three decades were devoted to a Titanic struggle for truth. This anguished search for a meaning that death would not destroy, estranged him from his wife, and made him indifferent to his children and his friends and no longer interested in the universe of his novels that had brought him wealth and fame. Suddenly he yearned for an art 'which would awaken higher and better feelings'; and ceased to be satisfied with describing the futilities of life to amuse idle readers, which was what he considered he had done in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Art must not be an end in itself but have an overriding ethical purpose. And so Tolstoy the artist became subservient to Tolstoy the preacher and prophet.

Tolstoy chose 'Resist not evil' as the text for his 'message' to mankind, and proceeded to repudiate the State and withdraw from the Church. The next twenty years were dedicated entirely to polemic writing on religious, social and educational themes (which the authorities vainly tried to suppress), until, as an old man of seventy-one, the plight of the Doukhobors moved him to look through his portfolio of unfinished literary works and complete something in aid of the Doukhobor Fund.

The 'Doukhobors' was the name given to a fundamentalist peasant sect whose precepts had much in common with Tolstoy's own teaching. Numbering between fifteen and sixteen thousand, they preached chastity, teetotalism, vegetarianism, the sharing of all goods and property and, above all, non-resistance to evil by force. Etymologically, the word signifies 'spirit-fighters', being originally intended by the Orthodox clergy to imply that the Doukhobors fought against the Spirit of God; but the Doukhobors themselves accepted the term as denoting that they fought not against but for and with the Spirit. The community was first heard of in the middle of the eighteenth century. Their doctrine became so clearly defined, and the number of their adherents increased so steadily, that by 1891 the Russian Government and the Church were seriously alarmed and started an energetic campaign to suppress the sect, whose refusal to have any part in military service was regarded as open rebellion. Hundreds died in the persecutions that followed, and some four thousand were scattered in remote mountain villages in the Caucasus, where they fell victim to hunger and disease. Tolstoy was deeply shocked, identified himself with the agitation in their favour and sent an article, *The Persecution of Christians in Russia in 1895* (the year he came in contact with them personally), to the *London Times*. As a result, the Society of Friends in England petitioned Emperor Nicholas II for permission for the Doukhobors to leave Russia. By 1898 this request to migrate abroad was granted, provided the sect agreed never to return and the Government was not called upon to finance their departure. A first party sailed for Cyprus, which was originally chosen for their settlement because at that time funds were not sufficient for transferring them to any other British territory. But as contributions swelled it was found possible to send a number of Doukhobor emigrants to Canada, where they were offered asylum and hospitality, and where they were joined early in 1899 by the party from Cyprus.

If it had not been for the Doukhobors and the necessity to raise money for their mass exodus Tolstoy might never have finished *Resurrection*, the idea for which had been suggested to him ten years previously by a report confided to him of a nobleman serving on a jury and recognizing the prostitute on trial for theft as a girl he had seduced when he was a young man.

Tolstoy was soon so absorbed in his first full-length novel for over twenty years (*Anna Karenina* had appeared in 1877) that distractions of any kind were almost painful. Since *War and Peace*, he told his wife, he had never been so powerfully gripped by the creative urge. *Resurrection* was the last of his great novels, and no contemporary literary work was so eagerly awaited, in Russia or abroad. It was at once translated into many languages and the proceeds handed over to the Friends' Doukhobor Committee. But in October 1901 the clerk of the Committee, John Bellows, declared that the Society of Friends ought not to have accepted 'money coming from a smutty book'. 'It arouses lust,' he wrote, 'and after a careful thinking it over . . . I must refund the money out of my own pocket, rather than let it remain as it is.'

To this Tolstoy replied a couple of months later (in English):

When I read a book the chief interest for me is the *Weltanschauung des Autors*, what he likes and what he hates. And I hope that the reader, which will read my book with the same view will find out what the author likes or dislikes and will be influenced with the sentiment of the author. And I can say that when I wrote the book I abhorred with all my heart the lust and to express this abhorrence was one of the chief aims of the book.

He might have added 'The whole truth can never be immoral', his verdict on the fiction of de Maupassant.

If, as Tolstoy himself most firmly believed, the criterion of a work of art is that it should convey the author's feelings, *Resurrection* is art of a high order. Its chief themes are the basic themes of art – love, passion, death – but they are treated with

such burning sincerity, such Evangelical simplicity and vitality, that they seem almost new to art. The reader's heart is infected by pity, his conscience by a compulsive need to crusade against cruelty and injustice; and Tolstoy's heroic search to discover the purpose of life becomes our striving, too. Tolstoy had now determined that the fictional form should be the means of propagating the stern message he was bent on delivering.

Like a clown at a country fair grimacing in front of the ticket-booth in order to lure the public inside the tent where the real play is being performed, so my imaginative work must serve to attract the attention of the public to my philosophic teaching [he wrote in a letter at the turn of the century].

Resurrection is the great imaginative synthesis of Tolstoyism, gravid with the fruits of a lifetime's agony. 'It is a kind of shrapnel shell of a novel,' declared one contemporary critic. 'The novel is but the containing case. The genius of the author is the explosive force, which scatters its doctrines like the closely packed bullets among the enemy' – the enemy on this occasion being the whole fabric of society, the Law Courts, the prison system and, in particular, the Church.

Resurrection is a panorama of Russia, of humanity in general, depicted on a canvas almost as vast as that of *Anna Karenina*; but in contrast to the aristocratic *ambiance* of *Anna Karenina* it is the underworld that we *experience* in *Resurrection*. And since Tolstoy could not work independently of nature, since his genius lay, not in invention but in a meticulous and sensitive reflecting – in the transmutation of actual persons – in the central figure of Nekhlyudov we have the last of Tolstoy's great self-portraits. In Nekhlyudov Tolstoy expresses his own deepest aspirations, his own views on every aspect of human existence. Nekhlyudov affixes the seal, as it were, to Tolstoy's own life. By the end of the book he has rendered accounts to himself and to the world. 'That night,' the novel concludes, 'an entirely new life began for Nekhlyudov, not so much because he had entered into new conditions

of life, but because everything that happened to him from that time on was endowed with an entirely different meaning for him. How this new chapter of his life will end, the future will show.' This hints at a sequel that will tell the story of Nekhlyudov in his new life, and indeed, six months after he finished the work, Tolstoy notes in his diary: 'I terribly want to write an artistic, not a dramatic but an epic continuation of *Resurrection*: the peasant life of Nekhlyudov.'

Tolstoy set himself to reproduce in artistic form the resurrection of fallen man. But he does not recognize the Christian conception of resurrection, and therefore it is the process of regeneration that he describes. Nekhlyudov does not rise from the dead: he is merely re-born to lead a (supposedly) better life. And we are not sure that he will even achieve this. Has not his whole career been one 'resurrection' after another? Inherited wealth enables him to change his form of life whenever one set of ideas is supplanted by another. As a university student, under the influence of Herbert Spencer he refused the property inherited from his father and gave it to the peasants. But as an officer in the Guards he finds his monthly allowance inadequate, and there are unpleasant interviews with his mother over money matters. He goes abroad to visit the picture galleries of Europe, and immediately sees himself as a painter; though of course the picture he starts never gets finished. A liaison with the wife of a marshal of the nobility begets an interest in schools, public works and liberalism, which, like the unfinished painting, palls in its turn; so that when he recognizes Maslova in the witness-box he is ripe for still another 'purging of the soul', as he terms his periodic reappraisals. And, as always, it will be carried out in his 'usual conscientious way' as he 'considers it right to do'. (Each time there are 'tears of tender emotion at his own goodness', and each time the new course is the one and only true direction, which he marvels that everybody else does not recognize, too.) On the face of things it would appear that the Nekhlyudovs of this world are concerned with their

fellow men, grieve with them, would right their wrongs. They confess their own guilt and are eager to atone – but all because at the given moment they like the idea and find ‘something pleasurable and soothing’ in the recognition of their own baseness. A sacrifice to the demands of conscience affords them ‘the highest spiritual enjoyment’. But when the impulse falters and the mood changes, to be replaced by a new inspiration, everything with which they lately sympathized to the point of self-abnegation is forgotten in a flash and no longer affects them. When Maslova refuses to take advantage of the ‘pardon’ obtained for her, in order to marry Simonson and follow him to the mines, Nekhlyudov is so immediately preoccupied with the search for a new life to take the place of the one that has just collapsed like a pack of cards that the spectacle of several hundred prisoners stifling in their stinking prison cells, where typhus is rife, his visit to the mortuary, where among others he sees the dead body of a consumptive whom only the day before he had been talking to and of whom he had grown ‘particularly fond’ – these dreadful scenes from Dante’s *Inferno* hardly register in his mind and it never occurs to him to do anything to alleviate the suffering all around him. He does not ever wonder how Maslova will survive punishment which she does not deserve and of which he is the main cause.

From the outset Maslova senses the false note in Nekhlyudov’s repentance. And anyway, what good could his repentance do her? It could not rehabilitate her. Nor can she bring herself to compromise and make use of him as her companions urge. She will intercede only for an old woman wrongly imprisoned for arson. Ten years of prostitution have not extinguished the Divine spark in her. (The decision she and two prostitute friends took one night in Carnival week, the merchant’s trust in her, the story behind the poisoning she was accused of, her ‘Madam’s’ regard for her; her behaviour at the trial towards the real culprits, the attitude of her fellow prisoners, her reactions to Nekhlyudov and Simonson –

are all abundant proof of this.) Nekhlyudov interprets her refusal to marry him as a sign that she loves him and therefore does not want to spoil his life. But in fact she has so little respect for him, so little belief in him, that she is always on her guard, never discussing her position with him, as she does with her companions in prison, never telling him of her thoughts, feelings or hopes. She behaves to him as a grown-up person to a child, allowing him to amuse himself with his new sensations – until she can bear it no longer and in an outburst of wounded pride tells him that she is not going to serve a second time as an object for his selfish experimenting. ‘You want to save yourself through me. You had your pleasure from me in this world, and now you want to get your salvation through me in the world to come.’ Except right at the beginning, when she had loved him and for a while continued to love him even after he got her with child before discarding her, their relationship did not ring true to her – any more than it did to Countess Tolstoy, who described it as ‘utterly false’. (Indeed, the Countess found the book ‘repulsive’, although she admitted and paid tribute to the genius of the descriptive passages. She was troubled by the likeness she could not help noticing between Nekhlyudov and her husband, who had portrayed his hero as progressing from degradation to regeneration. ‘He thinks this way about himself,’ she remarked in her Journal, no doubt for Tolstoy to read – they always read each other’s journals. ‘He has described all these regenerations in books very well, but he has never practised them in life . . .’)

In technique *Resurrection* equals the great epics of Tolstoy’s prime; but it covers more ground than any of his other novels. The essence of all that Tolstoy had thought and suffered since his spiritual change is crammed into its pages. There is no place for the lies which would cheat us into the belief that wrong may sometimes be right through passion, or genius, or heroism. Tolstoy’s concern is with the ‘grave, noble face of truth’ – he will compel us to recognize what is bad and

infect us with an urgent desire for improvement. *Resurrection* is written with all the old sustained exuberance. He has lost nothing of the creative compass of *War and Peace*, written over thirty years earlier when his powers were at their zenith. But the architectural lines are different. Whereas in his previous novels attention is continually shifted from one hero to another, in *Resurrection* Tolstoy follows Nekhlyudov step by step, hardly letting him out of sight for an instant. Other characters and incidents appear only in so far as they affect Nekhlyudov; otherwise they are allowed little validity beyond the seeming irrelevance of much that happens in 'real' life. It is psychologically exquisite. If Tolstoy is to know a man's thoughts and feelings he must first of all study every aspect of his physical being. He builds up his *dramatis personae* line upon line, like Holbein, until we have – not a photograph but the accumulated life of a personality. He is the most clear-seeing of all artists and can paint a colossal fresco with all the grandeur and economy which such a style demands, and at the same time give the marvellous detail almost of a miniature. With true artistic genius he senses the great and the eternal in the most apparently unimportant manifestations of everyday life: the curve of a mother's arms as she cradles her child; the awkward walk of someone who is embarrassed; a peasant's clumsy clothes, crooked legs or squinting eye. He sees beyond the historical reality of the given moment because his business is with the transcendental.

There could be no title more significant for a Russian than *Resurrection*. All down the centuries the Russian Christian has been preoccupied with the idea of, with the search for, immortality. The earthly history of mankind could not be an end in itself, could not be merely temporal. But victory over time – over death – postulates Resurrection, in the Gospel sense. For the Orthodox believer Christ is the manifestation of God in history, and the resurrection of Christ lies at the heart of all mystical striving. Tolstoy belongs far more to the Western world with its emphasis on the 'moral' and 'ethical'

teaching of Christ and a consequent enthusiasm for *l'activité utile*. But for the Russian mystic morals can *only* be the result of faith in eternal life. Kant's ethical teleology holds no attraction whatsoever for him. He is not interested in the 'utilitarian' aspect of morality as a means to the better organization of human society; but he has no difficulty in understanding and accepting the proposition: 'If I die, then the whole world dies in me, with me. If I am resurrected, then all mankind is resurrected in me, with me.'

Tolstoy's humanism antagonized his own class, whom he accused of doing violence to the little man. With the exception of a brief period after the Russo-Japanese war freedom of speech has never been realized in Russia, and *Resurrection* was ruthlessly cut by the official Censorship. In Part One the whole of Chapter 13 describing the effect of army life disappeared; and of Chapters 39 and 40 only the words 'The service began' were left. Nekhlyudov's visit to Toporov – a portrait of Pobedonostsev who presided over the Holy Synod from 1880 to 1905 – had, of course, to be struck out of Chapter 27 of Part Two; and Chapter 19 introducing the aged general in charge of the prison in Petersburg, Chapter 30 analysing the various categories into which so-called criminals fell and Chapter 38 describing the departure of the convict train from Moscow all suffered badly. But naturally it was Part Three, telling of the treatment of the prisoners on their way to Siberia, and conditions in Siberia, that suffered most. The first complete Russian text of *Resurrection* was published in England, where Vladimir Tchertkov, Tolstoy's disciple, had settled at Maldon in Essex after being banished from Russia, together with a number of other progressives. Tchertkov's wife discovered an old compositor who prided himself on being able to set Russian type, and in the year 1900 the firm of 'Headley Brothers, Printers, 14, Bishopgate Without, London, E.C.' printed a Russian text 'not mutilated by the Censor', as the title-page roundly informs us.

Tolstoy's attempts to rouse the oppressed against their

oppressors and his clamour for a moral reconstruction of all the institutions of contemporary society provoked opposition from the Church, for the reason that the Orthodox Church disclaims revolution brought about by force, seeing in any such violent change merely the substitution of one form of coercion for another. The Russian religious consciousness looks to Transfiguration, rather than revolution. It is impossible to establish justice on earth if people themselves do not suffer a sea-change and become 'different' by surmounting their narrow egoism, which is practicable only by considering meaning in relation to eternity, in contact with the Creator. But Tolstoy could never quite accept the fact that 'the law made nothing perfect' – that no law will turn bad people into good society. His hero does not see visions to send him winging his way to God: he must climb the laborious path of expiation, painful step after painful step, inspired only by an inner, 'moral' *desire* to atone.

In *Resurrection* Tolstoy voices this conflict with the Church, the bitterest of all the conflicts forced upon him by his unflinching search for absolute truth. To the end of his life he persisted in confining his quest to the ethical plane, until even his intrepid 'purgings of the soul' could advance him no farther and he found himself at a full stop – confronted by the cataclysmic choice between resurrection or – death.

It was Tolstoy's tragedy – and ours – that, like Selyenin, the assistant public prosecutor, he 'knew so little' of the teaching of the Church. In every description he gives of church services, ritual, traditions, texts, he disfigures and caricatures with such obvious tendentiousness and vehemence that art goes by the board. ('I wish you more spiritual freedom,' Turgenyev wrote to him in a brilliant flash of insight.) Everything that, as a rationalist, he could not accept, everything in which he could not BELIEVE, Tolstoy rejected with the intransigence of a man who knows himself to be right. Interpreting the essence of religious feeling as a consciousness of the 'equality and brotherhood of man',

he plunged into the ideological fray with the aim of helping the people 'to struggle out of their dark ignorance', indignant with those who used their enlightenment only 'to plunge them still deeper into it'.

The attack on the Church in *Resurrection* led to Tolstoy's formal excommunication by a decree dated 22 February 1901. An examination of the conflict, to which he himself attached enormous significance, can do much to explain the course of Russian history. The Russian is endowed by nature with a strong sense of the other world, and his concern with the primary source, the First Principle, places him on the boundary between the two worlds, where he lives two realities, the historical and the meta-historical, at one and the same time. Because of the importance of the eternal, the temporal is held to be of small account, and so there is little inclination to fight for temporal 'rights' and privileges – the Russian consciously or unconsciously looks to another judgement, on another plane. And so Tolstoy fought in vain when he strove to establish the kingdom of heaven by reforming the institutions of this globe. Moved as he could be by the dying of an ordinary unlettered peasant, he never perceived what lay at the root of nobility and peace in the face of death, so pre-occupied and grieved was he by the injustices suffered by man in the course of his earthly existence. And yet in the person of the little old man whom Nekhlyudov met on the ferry, and saw in prison later the same day, Tolstoy has drawn perhaps the most striking portrait of Melchizedek in all literature – Melchizedek 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God'.

At the beginning of October 1899, just as Tolstoy was finishing the third part of *Resurrection*, an unknown correspondent wrote to him from Baku, giving an account of himself and his principles which Tolstoy inserted almost word for word. 'They' hadn't been able to do anything to him because he was 'a free man', above every sort of insult or

injury. He did not have a name because he had renounced every name, place, country. He knew no name to answer to but the name of – Man. Nor did he reckon how old he was: he could not count the years, since he always was, and always would be. Like Melchizedek he had neither father nor mother; his Father was God, and his mother – the Earth. But even here Tolstoy proved unable to overcome the limitations of his rational moralism – although he did counsel his correspondent not to concentrate on the exposure of lies and deception to the exclusion of the love one owes to an erring fellow being. (As Maxim Gorky said, ‘Tolstoy was a human-kindly man.’) In an interview with a reporter of a Moscow newspaper Tolstoy said that in *Resurrection* he had ‘tried to portray various forms of love: exalted love, sensual love, and love of a still loftier kind, the love that ennobles man, and in this form of love lies resurrection’.

This work of Tolstoy’s goes farther than being a literary masterpiece: it steps outside the framework of pure art. (Those who disparage it, complaining of the philosophical digressions, are those in whom ‘the word that leaves behind the murk of passion and desire awakens no response’.) *Resurrection* is an expression of an integral contemplation of the world; a propagation of Tolstoy’s faith and moral ideals, portraying Russia as he saw her, within the bounds in which he was capable of experiencing her. There is never any indifference in Tolstoy, never an instant’s sparing of himself. His preoccupation was with mankind’s eternal problem, and nothing short of a whole solution would satisfy him. When he was brought to death ‘Earth felt the wound’.

ROSEMARY EDMONDS, *London, 1965*

Except on page 437 and page 468 the footnotes have been added by the translator.