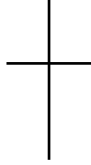


**Saint Luke of Simferopol
(Prince Yasenetsky-Voino)**

I CAME TO LOVE SUFFERING
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Gozalov Books Publishing
The Hague



This book has the blessing of
Monsignor Simon,
Archbishop of Brussels and Belgium

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FOREWORD BY THE PUBLISHERS



The author of this book, Saint Luke the Confessor (his worldly name was Valentin Yasenetsky-Voino), is a Russian saint of the twentieth century. He was born on April 27, 1877 in Kerch, Crimea and fell asleep in the Lord on June 11, 1961 in Simferopol, Crimea. Canonized by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in November 1995.

He was a descendent of a Belarussian-Polish impoverished princely family, and he was archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church and at the same time a prominent physician, surgeon, inventor, scientist, writer and painter.

The title of this book is a quote from Saint Luke's letter to his eldest son Mikhail. The full sentence is: "I began to love suffering that so amazingly purifies the soul."

From an early age, his ideal was to serve the needy and sick, and so he abandoned his successful study at the Art Academy and graduated as a doctor from the University of Kiev. To everyone's surprise, he said, "I studied medicine with one goal in mind: to work my whole life in the province as a doctor for the peasants." Indeed, he worked for several years under very unfavourable conditions as a general practitioner and surgeon in the remote towns and villages of Russia and the Ukraine, saving lives and performing spectacular operations, especially on the eyes. During the Russian Japanese war he worked in a military hospital. At the same time, he did scientific investigation of some cases from his practice, and learned several European languages to study Western professional literature.

His innovative ideas and advanced surgical techniques received wide recognition in the Russian as well as the European medical world. He became head of the chair of surgery

at several institutes and was honoured with a number of scientific titles. He received awards for some of his medical scientific works.

He inherited the deep religiosity of his father, and from an early age he became known for his spontaneous public sermons on the Christian way and values.

During the severe trials of the Russian Church, when the communists had come to power in the country and were engaged in a methodical genocide of the clergy, Innocenty, Bishop of Tashkent, asked him to become a priest. Valentin Yasenetsky accepted this request and received priestly ordination, with the bishop describing his future mission in the words of the Holy Apostle Paul: “not to baptize, but to evangelize.” (1Cor 1:17)

Over the years, after the death of his beloved wife, he took monastic vows and was named after the holy Evangelist Luke; then he was ordained a bishop. After many prosecutions by the Soviet authorities and convictions on false grounds (including false testimonials from some colleagues, students and friends, as well as false reports, elicited by the secret police) and an exile for many years to Siberia, above the Arctic Circle, he was eventually released and he ended his days as Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea. Throughout all the trials, he remained true to his Russian Orthodox faith and principles, and continued his work as a doctor and scientist, despite the blindness that struck him in the last years of his life. Our special thanks to Archimandrite Nikon (Yakimov), Rector of the Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in The Hague, who brought this amazing book to our attention.

Marijcke Tooneman and Guram Kochi, Gozalov Books Publishing

The Hague, January 2021



Saint Luke the Confessor

"The body is composed of not only many, but also unequal parts, which are in turn composed of four elements. When it falls ill, it is in need of various medicines and, moreover, medicine composed of various herbs. The soul, on the contrary, is immaterial, and therefore simple and uncomplicated. When ill, one medicine heals it: the holy Spirit, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Venerable Symeon the New Theologian

"O mother of mine, desecrated, despised mother, holy church of Christ! You shone with the light of truth and love, and now, what is the matter? Thousands and thousands of churches across the face of the Russian land are ruined and destroyed, while others are profaned, and still others turned into vegetable storehouses, populated by nonbelievers, and only a few are preserved. In the place of beautiful cathedrals: smoothly paved empty squares or theaters and cinemas. O mother of mine, holy church! Who is guilty of your desecration? Only the builders of the new life, of the church of the earthly kingdom, of equality, social justice and abundance of the fruits of the earth? No, we must say with bitter tears, not only they, but the people themselves. With what tears will our people pay, our people who have forgotten the way to the church of God?"

Archbishop Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky)¹

CHAPTER 1. YOUTH

My father was catholic, very devout, he always went to church and prayed at home for hours. Father was a man of remarkably pure soul, in no one did he see anything wrong, and he trusted everybody, although he was surrounded by dishonest people because of his profession. In our orthodox family, he, as a catholic, was somewhat alienated.

Mother prayed at home fervently, but she never went to church, it seems. The reason of this was her indignation about the greed and quarrels of the priests that were going on before her eyes. My two brothers, lawyers, did not show signs of religiosity. However, they always went to the placing in the tomb² and kissed the shroud, and they always were at the Easter morning service. When she was a student, my older sister was shaken with horror by the accident at Khodynka Field. She developed a mental illness, and jumped out of a window from the third floor. She had severe hip and shoulder fractures and kidney ruptures. Subsequently she developed kidney stones from which she died, having lived only twenty-five years. My younger sister is well up to now. She is a beautiful and very pious woman.



I did not receive a religious education in the family, and if it is possible to talk about hereditary religiosity at all, then probably I inherited it mainly from my very devout father. Since childhood I had a passion for drawing, and I graduated simultaneously from the gymnasium and the Kiev art school, where I showed considerable artistic abilities. I participated in a travelling exhibition with a small picture of a beggarly old man, standing with a hand stretched out. My attraction to painting was so strong that when I finished gymnasium I decided to go to the Saint Petersburg academy of arts.

But during the entrance examinations I suffered heavy doubts about whether I had chosen the correct path in life. A brief period of hesitation ended by deciding that I had no right to study what I like, but that I was obliged to study what is use-

ful for suffering people. From the academy I sent a telegram to my mother about my desire to enter medical school. However, all places had already been taken. I was offered to enter the faculty of natural sciences, in order to switch to medicine afterwards. I refused because I had a great dislike of natural sciences. I did have a pronounced interest in the humanities, particularly in theology, philosophy and history. So I preferred to go to the faculty of law. I spent a year studying with interest history and philosophy of law, political economy, and Roman law.

But a year later I was again overwhelmingly attracted to painting. I set off for Munich, where I entered the private art school of professor Knirr. However, already after three weeks I was drawn home irrepressibly by homesickness. I went to Kiev and for a year I intensely studied drawing and painting with a group of friends.



At this time my faith showed its first signs. Every day, and sometimes twice a day, I went to the Kiev Lavra of the Caves. I was often in the Kiev churches and when I returned from there, I would sketch what I had seen in the lavra and the churches. I did a lot of drawings, sketches and drafts of praying people and of pilgrims who had travelled to the lavra for a thousand versts. Then already the direction of artistic activity took form, in which I would have worked if I had

not left painting. I would have gone the road of Vasnetsov³ and Nesterov⁴, for the principal religious direction in my pursuit of painting was already clearly defined. By this time I clearly understood the process of artistic creation. Everywhere, on the streets and in trams, on squares and in bazaars, I observed all pronounced facial features, shapes, movements, and upon returning home I sketched all this. At the exhibition of the Kiev art school I received an award for these sketches of mine.

To rest from this work I walked every day for two versts along the bank of the Dnieper; on the road I was thinking hard about very difficult theological and philosophical questions. Nothing of course, came out of these thoughts of mine, because I had no scientific training.

At the same time I became passionately engrossed in the ethical teaching of Leo Tolstoy⁵ and became, one might say, a confirmed Tolstoyan: I slept on the floor on a carpet and in the summer when I was at the dacha I mowed grass and rye along with the peasants without lagging behind them. However, my Tolstoyism did not last long, only until the time when I read his essay "What I believe."⁶ His essay was published abroad because it was banned. It repulsed me strongly by its mockery of the orthodox faith. I immediately realized that Tolstoy was a heretic, very far from true Christianity.

Not long before that I had painstakingly read the New Testament which had given me a correct idea of the teaching of Christ. According to good old custom I had received the holy book from the headmaster when I was handed the school-leaving certificate as a farewell gift for life. I kept this holy book for decades. Very many passages in it made a deep impression on me. I marked them with a red pencil.

But nothing could compare with the tremendous power of the impression that was produced by the passage of the Gospel in which Jesus shows the disciples the fields of ripe wheat, and says to them: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers' into His harvest."⁷ My heart literally trembled, I silently said, "O Lord! Do You really have too few labourers?!" Later, after many years, when the Lord called me to be a worker on His grain field, I was sure that this evangelical text was the first time God called me to serve Him.

This rather strange year went by like that. It was possible to enroll at the medical faculty, but again I was overwhelmed by doubts of populist nature. According to my youthful impulsiveness, I decided I needed as soon as possible to take up useful practical work for the common people. My thoughts were roaming about becoming a medical assistant or a country school teacher, and in this mood I once went to the director of the public colleges in the Kiev school district with the request to place me in one of the schools. The director turned

out to be a sensible man with an astute mind. He appreciated my populist aspirations, but very energetically discouraged me from what I was planning, and persuaded me to enter the medical faculty.

This was consistent with my desire to be useful to farmers whose medical aid was so badly provided for, but my near aversion of natural sciences stood in the way. Nevertheless I overcame this aversion and entered the medical faculty at the university of Kiev.

When I studied physics, chemistry, mineralogy, I had the almost physical sensation that I was forcing my brain to work on what was alien to it. My brain, like a squeezed rubber ball, tried to push out contents foreign to it. Nonetheless, I got only excellent marks and unexpectedly I became very interested in anatomy. I investigated bones. At home I drew and sculpted them from clay. And with my dissection of corpses I immediately attracted the attention of all the fellow students and the professor of anatomy. Already in the second year my fellow students unanimously decided that I would be a professor of anatomy, and their prophecy came true. After twenty years I really did become a professor of topographic anatomy and operative surgery.



In the third year I became passionately interested in studying operations on dead bodies. My capabilities underwent an interesting evolution: my love for form turned into love of anatomy and my ability to draw subtly

turned into precise artful skill when doing anatomical dissection and during operations on dead bodies. From a failed painter, I became an artist in anatomy and surgery.

In the third year, I was unexpectedly elected class representative. It happened like this: before one lecture I learned that one of my fellow students on the course, a Pole, struck another fellow student, a Jew, on the cheek. At the end of the lecture, I stood up and asked for attention. All fell silent. I made a passionate speech in which I denounced the disgraceful act of the Polish student. I talked about lofty standards of moral-

ity, about projection of resentment, I called to mind the great Socrates, who reacted calmly to his quarrelsome wife when she poured a pot of dirty water over his head. This speech made such a great impression that I was unanimously elected class representative.

I passed the state exams brilliantly with only excellent marks. The professor of general surgery told me at the exam: "Doctor, you now know a lot more than I do, because you already know all parts of medicine, and I have forgotten a lot that does not apply directly to my specialty."

Only for the exam in medicinal chemistry⁸ I got three out of five. For the theoretical exam I did excellently, but I still had to do a urinalysis. As it was regrettably the custom, the laboratory assistant took money from the students in exchange for telling what should be found in the first flask and in the test tube, so I knew that in the urine I was given to explore there was sugar. However, due to a small mistake Trommer's reaction did not happen, and when the professor, without looking at me asked, "Well, what did you find there?" I could have said that I had found sugar, but I said Trommer's reaction did not reveal sugar.

This one 'three' mark did not prevent me to get a physician's degree with honours.

When we all got our diplomas, my course mates asked me what occupation I intended to have. When I replied that I intended to be a country doctor, they opened their eyes wide and said: "What, you will be a country doctor?! Why, you are a scientist by vocation!" I was offended by the fact they did not understand me, because I studied medicine with the sole purpose of being my whole life long a rural peasant doctor to help poor people.⁹

CHAPTER 2. WORK IN COUNTRY HOSPITALS

I didn't have the chance to immediately become a country doctor, because I graduated from the university in the autumn of 1903, just before the outbreak of the war with Japan. The beginning of my medical work was as a military field-surgeon at the hospital of the Kiev Red Cross near the city of Chita.¹⁰ In our hospital, there were two surgical departments: an experienced surgeon from Odessa was in charge of one of them and the chief doctor of the detachment entrusted me the other one, although there were in the detachment two surgeons much older than me. I immediately took up major surgical operations, operated the wounded, and with no special training in surgery I immediately started doing major critical surgeries on bones, joints and on the skull. The results were quite good, there were no accidents. In my work I was helped a lot by a recently published brilliant book by the French surgeon Lejars¹¹ "Urgent surgery," which I had studied thoroughly before the trip to the Far East. I was not a staff doctor and I never wore a military uniform.



In Chita, I married a nurse, who had worked in the Kiev military hospital before. There she was addressed as holy sister.¹² She won me not so much by her beauty as by her exceptional kindness and gentle nature. There, two doctors asked for her hand, but she had made the vow of celibacy. By marrying me she broke her vow. So, the night before our holy Matrimony in the church built by the Decembrists she prayed before the icon of the Saviour. Suddenly it seemed to her that Christ turned away His face and His image disappeared from the icon case. It seems it was a reminder of her vow, and the Lord heavily punished her for breaking it with unbearable, pathological jealousy. We left Chita before the end of the war, and I went to work as a doctor in the Ardatov district in the province of Simbirsk.¹³ There I had to manage the hospital. In difficult and misera-

ble conditions I immediately began to operate in all the departments of surgery and ophthalmology.¹⁴ But after a few months I had to give up working in Ardatov because of intolerable obstacles.

It should be noted that from the start in the Ardatov hospital I faced great difficulties and the dangers of the use of general anesthesia with poor assistants, and already there I had the idea that it is necessary if possible to avoid narcosis and substitute it in as wide as possible a range of cases with *local* anesthesia. I decided to go to work in a small hospital, and found one in the village of Verkhniy Lyubazh in Fatezh district in Kursk province. However, there it was not easier, because it was a small local hospital with only ten beds. I began to operate extensively and soon acquired such fame that patients came to me from all quarters, and from other districts of Kursk province and the neighbouring Oryol province as well.

I remember a curious event. A young beggar who had been blind since childhood recovered his sight after surgery. Two months later he collected a lot of blind people from the whole district. In a long chain they led each other by sticks. In the hope of being cured they all came to me.

At this time the first edition of the book by professor Braun¹⁵ "Local anesthesia: its scientific basis and practical use" came out. I eagerly read it and from it I first learned of local anesthesia.¹⁶ A few methods of local anesthesia had very recently been published. I remembered, among other things, that Braun considered it unlikely that it is possible to accomplish local anesthesia of the sciatic nerve. This aroused in me a lively interest in local anesthesia and I set for myself the task to take up the development of new methods for it.

In Lyubazh I came across some very rare and interesting surgical cases, and I wrote there my first two articles about them: "Elephantiasis of the face, plexiform neuroma" and another: "Retrograde strangulation in case of rupture of an intestinal loop."

Excessive fame made my position in Lyubazh unbearable. I had to receive out-patients who came in multitudes. And operate at the hospital from nine o'clock in the morning until the evening. And drive around the rather large locality. And at night investigate under the microscope what had been cut

out during the operation. And make drawings of the microscopic preparations for my articles. So, soon even my youthful strength was not sufficient for the tremendous work.

Also my first tracheotomy¹⁷ deserves to be mentioned. It was done in very exceptional circumstances. I came to examine a country school in a village near Lyubazh. Classes had already ended. Suddenly a young woman came running to the school. She was carrying a child that was completely suffocated. He had choked on a small piece of sugar, which had stuck in his throat. I only had a penknife, a bit of cotton wool and a little mercuric chloride solution with me. Nevertheless, I decided to do a tracheotomy and asked the teacher to help me. But she closed her eyes and ran away. The old cleaning lady turned out a bit braver, but she also left me on my own when I started the operation. I put the swaddled baby in my lap and quickly made him a tracheotomy. It couldn't have been done better, it hardly leaked. Instead of a tracheotomy tube I inserted into the trachea a goose quill the old lady had prepared. Unfortunately, the operation did not help, because the piece of sugar had got stuck lower, apparently in the bronchi. The district council transferred me to the Fatezh district hospital, but also there I was not able to work for long. The Fatezh district was a pocket of the rarest of bison¹⁸ and black-hundredists¹⁹. And the most extreme of them was Batezatul, the chairman of the district council, who became famous long before the war for his bill to force Chinese farmers to emigrate to Russia and send them to landowners as bondservants.

Batezatul considered me a revolutionary for the fact that I had not set out immediately to treat a district police officer when he was ill. I would have had to abandon all my work. So by a resolution of the council I was dismissed from service. This, however, did not end well. On the market day one of the blind men I had cured climbed on a barrel and pronounced a rousing speech about my dismissal. And under his leadership a crowd of people went to smash up the district council, the building of which was on the market square. Only one member of the council was there. From fear he hid under the table. Of course, I quickly had to leave Fatezh. That was in 1909.

In 1907 in Lyubazh my first child was born - Misha. And in the next year, in 1908, my daughter Elena. I had to perform the duties of a midwife myself. From Fatezh I left for Moscow and

there for a little less than a year I was an extern at the surgical clinic of professor Dyakonov. According to the rules of this clinic, all doctors-externs had to write a doctoral thesis, and I was proposed the theme "Tuberculosis of the knee joint." After two or three weeks I was invited by professor Dyakonov and he asked how my work on the thesis was going. I replied that I had already read the books, but that I had no interest in the subject. The wise professor listened to my answer with undivided attention, and when he found out that I had my own theme he began to ask about it with lively interest. It turned out that he knew nothing about local anesthesia, and I had to tell him about the book of Braun. To my delight, he asked me to continue working on local anesthesia, and to abandon the proposed theme.²⁰

Since my subject demanded anatomical investigations and experiments with injections of coloured gelatin on corpses, I had to go to the institute of topographic anatomy and operative surgery, whose director was professor Rein,²¹ chairman of the Moscow surgical society. But it turned out that he had not heard or read anything about local anesthesia.

Soon I was able to find an easy and reliable way to inject near the sciatic nerve at its very exit out of the pelvic cavity, something Heinrich Braun believed to be a hardly solvable problem. I also found a way to inject near the median nerve to achieve regional anesthesia throughout the hand. About these discoveries I gave a lecture at the Moscow surgical society,²² and it aroused great interest.



But I had nothing I to live from in Moscow with a wife and two young children, so I left to work in a twenty-five bed hospital in Romanovka village in Balashov district in Saratov province.²³ There I organized a large surgical practice. I published a report on it in book form based on the model of the clinic reports of professor Dyakonov. I continued my work on local anesthesia in Moscow during the annual month-long vacations in the institute of professor

Rein and professor Karuzin²⁴ at the subfaculty of descriptive

anatomy. I was working from morning to evening there. I examined three hundred skulls and found a very important means to inject near the second branch of the trigeminal nerve at the very exit of the foramen rotundum.²⁵ By the end of this work I already was no longer in Romanovka, but occupied the position of chief physician and surgeon of a fifty beds district hospital in Pereslavl.²⁶

Shortly before we left Romanovka my son Alyosha was born, whilst I had a big adventure. The time of labour drew near, but I took a chance and went to a sanitary board meeting in Balashov, hoping to return soon. I didn't wait for the end of the board meeting and I hurried to the station. There I saw the train. It had already whistled for the second time. I boarded the train without having had time to buy a ticket. Soon I saw there were many Tatars on it, which did not happen in a train to Romanovka. It turned out that I was not in the right train, but in the train to Kharkov, so I had to go back to Balashov from the nearest station. But God stood by, because in Romanovka I found my son already born. A female doctor had received him. She had come back from the sanitary board before me and stopped there on the way to her medical locality. In 1916, while living in Pereslavl, I defended my doctoral thesis on local anesthesia in Moscow. The opponents were professor Martynov,²⁷ an assistant professor of topographic anatomy and operative surgery whose name I do not remember, and professor Karuzin.

Of interest was the response of professor Martynov. He said: "We are used to doctoral theses generally being written on a prescribed topic, with the purpose of obtaining high functions at work and their scientific value is smallish. But when I read your book, I got the impression of a bird who cannot restrain himself from singing. I highly appreciated the book." And professor Karuzin was very agitated, he ran up to me, shook my hand and painstakingly apologized that he had not been interested in my work in the attic where skulls are preserved. He had no idea that such a brilliant work was being created there.

From the university of Warsaw I received the large Chojnacki prize of nine hundred gold rubles for my thesis. They were intended "for the best works that will lay a new path in medicine." However, I happened not to receive this money, because

my book was published in a small edition, only 750 copies, and it was quickly sold out in bookstores where I imprudently had sent them all, and I could not present the university of Warsaw with the required number of copies.



For a country doctor which I was for thirteen years, Sundays and holidays are the busiest and the most burdened by an enormous amount of work. So neither in Lyubazh, nor in Romanovka, nor in Pereslavl-Zalessky did I have an opportunity to go to church services and for many years I did not fast. However, in the last years of my life in Pereslavl, I did find the opportunity to visit the cathedral sometimes, although with difficulty. I had my own permanent place there, and this caused great joy among the faithful of Pereslavl.

In my life there was another great development, which the Lord initiated in Pereslavl.

From the beginning of my surgical activity in Chita, Lyubazh and Romanovka I clearly realized the significance of purulent surgery and how little knowledge about it I took with me from the university. I set myself the task to make a profound independent study of the diagnosis and treatment of purulent diseases. At the end of my stay in Pereslavl it came to my mind to document my experience in a separate book: "Essays on purulent surgery." I made a plan for the book and wrote an introduction to it. And then, to my surprise, a very strange persistent thought appeared: "When this book is written, the name of a bishop will be on it."

I had never dreamed of being a clergyman, let alone a bishop, but the omniscient God fully knows our unknown life paths already when we are in our mother's womb. As you will see further on, already in a few years my persistent thought had become a full reality: "When this book is written, the name of a bishop will be on it."

In Pereslavl-Zalessky we lived for 6½ years. There my youngest son Valentin was born.

In the city and the factory hospital, I developed a very extensive surgical practice. I was one of the pioneers in the then new major operations on the biliary tract, stomach, spleen, and even the brain. In addition, in 1915-1916 I headed a small hospital for the wounded.

In early 1917, my wife's elder sister came to us. She had just buried her young daughter in the Crimea. Her daughter had died of galloping consumption. To our great misfortune, she had brought the quilt with her, under which her sick daughter had lain. I told my wife Anna that with the blanket she had brought death to us. And so it happened: Anna's sister lived with us only a couple of weeks, and soon after her departure, I discovered that Anna had obvious signs of pulmonary tuberculosis.

This coincided with the time when through an advertisement in the newspaper with very big competition, I was invited to Tashkent for the post of chief physician and surgeon of a large urban hospital. Our girl-servant who had recently given birth to a child was going with us. Halfway from Pereslavl to Moscow we had to stay for a week at the guesthouse of the Trinity Lavra of Saint Sergius due to Anna having a high fever. The train trip to Moscow and the road further on to Tashkent with small children were extremely difficult because rail traffic was already heavily disturbed.

In Tashkent we had the excellent hospital head physician's flat with five rooms. But I often had to scrub the floors myself because of the disarray of life which is inevitable during a revolution.²⁸ In 1919 an internecine war went on in the city between the Tashkent fortress garrison and a regiment of Turkmen soldiers under the leadership of a military commissar²⁹ who had betrayed the revolution. Cannon shells were flying in great numbers from both sides across the whole city and over the hospital, and under them I had to walk to the hospital.

The rebellion of the Turkmen regiment was suppressed. Now the reprisal began against the participants of the counter-revolution. In the process, both I and the hospital household manager had to endure terrible hours. We were arrested by a certain Andrey, a hospital morgue attendant, who nourished hatred against me because he had been punished by the head of the city after a complaint of mine. The hospital household