

**We are not given to
understand**

Katerina Korin

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«Издательские решения»

Korin K.

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This is Katerina Korin's second book. The disease erased the author's memory, and my former life would probably have been lost forever, writes Katerina, if there had not been the first book, "You're Never Alone." Gradually, very gradually, you learn to see the good in your illness, says Katerina. Understand that God brilliantly creates for each of us the best conditions for the soul to take place.

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This is Katerina Korin's second book. A disease erased the author's memory, and, as Katerina says, «My former life could have disappeared forever if it wasn't for my first book – *You Are Never Alone*».

Gradually, very gradually you learn to see the good in your disease, Katerina says. To understand that God ingeniously creates best conditions for each of our souls to exist.

In Lieu of a Preface. Why Did I Write the Book?

In summer 2021, my first book, *You're Never Alone*, was published. However, if someone asked me – what is it about? – I wouldn't recollect it. If it wasn't on my desk, I wouldn't remember the book even existed. Moreover, I only know the title because I see it on the cover. The disease erased my memory, erased my past, and my former life could have disappeared forever if it wasn't for my records.

At that point, my world contained only today's events – morning, noon, evening. I went through four epileptic crises, and now I understand how my brain works: from a physiological point of view, it doesn't remember the past anymore, nor does it think about the future, I live in the moment, now. There were even hours and days when I did not realize who I was. It happened the first moment after I woke up from the first seizure, the most destructive to my memory, making me unconscious of myself. New crises erased my memory again and again. The fourth seizure was easier, but after it, I hardly remember the first crises, they were blotted out from my memory.

When my memory began to come back little by little, I remembered my book, having no idea what was in it. It took me a while to dare to open it, and when I started reading, I found myself in a completely unfamiliar world. I didn't know what time I was in. In the past, I guess? Still, I kept harking back to the past. I had a hard time reading – written text is difficult for my perception, but I kept repeating to myself I could do it.

I read slowly, slowly, and wondered what was written there. Everything was so unfamiliar, alien, as if it was written by another person, a stranger – not my language, not my style. I didn't recognize the book, I didn't recognize myself in the woman telling about her life. After all, my memory did not hold a trace of the events described. But I was so excited! I enjoyed the stories I read. I saw pictures, recognized people, memories came to life. Thus, the text helped me remember who I was. Having read to the last page, I remembered everything. And I won't forget it anymore. Even if my memory disappears again, I will know where to find myself – in my book.

Literally three days before I got down to a new manuscript, I realized that it was first of all for my sake that God favoured me with writing *You Are Never Alone*. Just to help me return to myself.

Why Did I Forget Everything?

I thought a lot, looking for answers to my questions – why did I forget everything? Why did I have to recollect my life? Then I came to the conclusion that the disease gave me the chance to start everything from scratch. I had my memory back, it was restored, but I created my perception and significances anew. I assessed my past differently, I analyzed it otherwise than in the moment. God gave me an amazing chance to reconsider everything cardinally, to see my life as if from the outside, to reevaluate and redefine deeds, as if they were done by another person, and now I am looking and thinking. Other people do not have such an opportunity, they only have memories.

Of course, everyone reevaluates sometimes. Being forty-five and remembering the events that happened twenty-five years ago, you see them differently than in your youth. But rarely does anyone get the chance to reconsider their own life as dramatically as I did. And I understand that my personality has changed.

With regard to religion, too, I now differ from my former self. Previously, just a while ago, a year ago, I was sure that there could only be one way, «either-or», I was uncompromising. For example, Christianity or Buddhism. Today, I am comfortable with the thought that there are ideas in Christianity that I support, there are ideas in Buddhism that resonate with me. I have realized that we can borrow any ideas from all religions, we are not obliged to blindly follow only one of them. And that's okay.

One would think it's just a simple thought, but it had never come to me before. Previously, I had been tormented by the question: how can it be that I, a Christian, doubt the Christ's resurrection? I pretended there was only one truth, and it cannot be questioned. Now it brings a smile to my face. How do you discover the truth? What is written in religious books is not dogma; one thing there is true, another is not. I love myth, parable, it perfectly corresponds to my spirit, I do believe. But I have many questions. Did Jesus ascend on the third day? Why on the third? Where did He ascend to? I don't understand. And that's okay. I don't understand and maybe I never will. It does not matter! From different religions, I will take what corresponds to my spiritual age, what I am ready for. Again, it will change over the course of my life. The events of my life will change this vision.

What's the Use in My Living If I Can Do Nothing?

There was a moment when I really felt sorry for myself. I wept for my crippledness, for my inability to walk normally, for my constant dizziness. I used to love dancing! I turned music on and danced. I will never be able to dance again. And this word «never» struck right in the heart. Now I can't even read the books I want, because I can't read with my eyes, I can only listen to audio books. I lost everything.

Sometimes I thought about death. What's the point of living if you can't do anything? But I was able to say to myself: first, accept it. It's not just words, it's a process. And I asked myself, «What can I do? What can I tell myself to tackle this problem?» The answer came in the form of a conviction: «I am strong». Now, when I am about to throw a pity party, I remind myself, «I am strong». It helps. I am sure I can overcome something even stronger than things causing my current suffering. Because I am strong.

Still, there are days when self-confidence seems to me an illusion. Once again, the nightmares seem to be winning. And then I understand that I have absolutely not accepted it, that I feel sorry for myself again, I do not want to endure. I feel that acceptance was nothing but a word...

Maybe humility is a multi-layered process? First, you accept everything in words, and then you do it with your heart. But if I cry and feel sorry for myself, am I strong at all? I have no right to cry. Only without tears and complaints will I become the one who accepted it. And over time, the tears become more seldom.

Acceptance is when we stop suffering because of something. Acceptance is the absence of suffering. Here's what I'm thinking right now.

Freedom of Choice

Why doesn't God reveal the truth to us? Why don't we know for sure? For example, where does life come from, where does a human origin from? For so many years, humans have been inhabiting the Earth and we are not allowed to reveal the secret, so all we are left to do is believe. We don't know anything for sure. And when the Mother of God mourns for Her son, She does not know for certain that He will rise on the third day.

In response to my questions, an idea came to my mind: it is important that every person has freedom of choice. God gives us the freedom to choose. This freedom is lack of knowledge. When you don't know for sure, you are free to choose whatever you want, to believe in whatever you choose without being ordered. If we knew for sure all about the advent of life and our after-death path, we would not be free. There is no other way the faith can happen. Everything is meaningless without this freedom. And this freedom will be eternal: as long as mankind exists, a human will not know the answers to these questions.

People are looking for ways to the truth, and they believe they have found them. There are thousands of books out there, about religious awareness and faith. Some choose Christianity. Others choose Islam. Some people believe in parapsychology. But, if you think about it, none of the creeds tells the only truth. Because it always lives in diversity, obeying the freedom given to us by God. No one will ever know for sure if they are right or wrong. Because it contradicts the concept of freedom.

Christianity believes that God belittled Himself by becoming a man. For me, this is a very interesting idea. He consciously downplays and becomes a mere mortal. Does God want to embrace a human life by living it? Perhaps everything that happened to God down on earth is nothing more than a myth, a metaphor, but the idea itself is amazing, brilliant, that God reduces Himself to the size of a man. When God speaks of Jesus Christ, He says that having taken this shape, He humbles Himself. This is how the concept of the Son of God was put into life.

Christianity often repeats that God is alive, that He is the same as anyone of us. It might be an otherwise spoken Buddhist concept: we can all become a Buddha, we are somewhat «Gods». This very idea is expressed in Christianity in such understandable words! Jesus Christ reminds us that every person is God, a little God. All people are sons of God. The Son of God is not only about Jesus Christ, but about each of us. And we are all parts of the whole – the Divine. Christian Saint Athanasius said that God became man so that we might become God.

In my understanding, Jesus Christ is no doubt a man. But the question is different – did He resurrect? This is unknown. What is resurrection? This means that on the third day, His flash changed, the dead body was filled with life again, and He ascended to heaven. This is what I don't understand, it looks like a metaphor. Just like the words of the Holy Scriptures saying we will all resurrect. In other words, will we all live again, again and again, endlessly? It seems to me that the idea of resurrection suggested in the sacred writings of the Church Fathers is the words about our life coming after death. If we leave out mythology, everything becomes clear and logical: in different guises, the soul will live forever.

Jesus Christ, apparently, was the wisest of the wisest. Buddha. The power of His awareness reaches incredible heights. How was He born? Who gave birth to Him? Is the Mother of God symbolized by a beautiful mom who was just a human, a woman? Or is She a creature of the same heights as Her Son? For the Mother of God ascended to heaven after death. Is this phenomenon described in Buddhism as escaping the wheel of samsara? A way out of the vicious circle of rebirths to an incomprehensible other level available only to enlightened people. What will happen to Them next? It is unknown, it is the secret of mankind, the biggest secret that is not revealed to anyone in their lifetime. And there is no need for that. This knowledge must remain a mystery, because in that

is how God wants us – each one of us – to look for our own answer. If we are given this chance, we ourselves will open it while we are alive.

Who Is the God?

When I say God, I mean some kind of energy guiding us through life. It's just logical for me to call it a God, but I don't mean a specific God – an old man sitting in the clouds. Of course not.

We are His children. I do believe in this: we are children of God, and He guides us as if we were the little ones. Do you remember the Parable of the Prodigal Son? The son left his father and run through all his inherited wealth, but later, he came back saying he had been wrong. This is my favourite parable. Because it is accurate in describing our relationship with God. We make mistakes, and God guides us mercifully, pointing us at our mistakes, and embraces us as we are, with all our missteps. Just like in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the father accepts the young man, notwithstanding his dissolute life and his sins; the father gave him the best clothes and did everything for him, for he is a father. That's what the God does to anyone of us.

We often make mistakes out of ignorance, we do not understand. The so-called retribution – in fact, forgiveness – can be stretched out in time and come up 20, 30, 40 years later. A person can understand where they misstepped only at the close of their days. God has already let me understand my wrong decisions.

In my opinion, the problem with Christianity is that, according to it, God is separate from a man, on its own, and a man is all by himself. There is a big mystery here. According to Buddhism, God is «we». We are God. In Buddhism, absolutely all events, all tangible things are the integral whole. It is only divided into different parts, and one of these parts is God in the Christian world.

God in the Christian world is also part of a structure of which we know nothing. We don't know what it is. But He exists. It's hard for me to put into words what I have understood. The presence of God in everything can be expressed by the word «divinity». Also, the presence of God in everything can be called «influence». You change depending on what you read today, with whom you spoke today. Through our environment, we change and influence each other. Everything in the world correlates. Without relationships, there would be no world. All our material and spiritual values exist only in relation to other things. It is important.

Buddhism says that everything exists only because of relationships, because everything is interconnected. Every smallest thing, a mental or material one, is connected with another thing. Nothing is for no reason. This connection creates the material and spiritual world, their interconnection creates our worlds. If not for this relationship, there would be «nothing». The human brain is unable to imagine this «nothing». It's incredibly hard to imagine. It is more than emptiness. So, the world is «something».

The relationship of all elements, material and spiritual, all this at once is God, that's how I see it. After all, if it didn't exist, there would be «nothing». World as emptiness? But the world is not empty, the world exists. So, it is not empty. And this «non-emptiness», it is there.

Christianity is one of the absolutely beautiful religions, it gives us the life rules that explain our existence in this world. It gives us these rules in the form of signs, synchronicity, or mystical things.

But there are, perhaps, other worlds living by other rules. We can neither see them nor understand them. Maybe someday we will discover other worlds. But first, we need to tackle our world. In relation to our world, we are still children. Therefore, God does not give us more, He gives according to our strength and understanding.

And here is where a conflict arises: the personal God, who is well known to us from Christianity, He is not the only one existing in the world. He is just a part of the world. And everything connected with Him, the divine, which we, say in Christianity, or in Buddhism, or in Hinduism, know about God, is only what we know about Him through the lens of our world. In another world, we would know something else. All we can say about God is that He is there and He exists. And the God that

we know in Christianity and other religions is our illusions, our projections, our fantasies that help us live. These are explanations that are available to us, that we can perceive with our minds.

He is definitely a father. This is what the Buddha says. He is a mother, in the person of the Mother of God, Her features, sacrifice, compassion. That is, God is my father and mother. And here is what I did not understand for a long time: He is my true friend. Not only a father, but also a friend who speaks to me as an equal. This is a serious thought.

Over the years of illness, God became the closest one to me. Without God, I now do not live at all. He is the only one that keeps me on this planet. Yes, of course, caring for my children keeps me going. But I wouldn't be myself if I didn't have God.

I have realized that I wouldn't live without Him.

Throughout my illness, all these years, I have been coping with life only in connection with God. He makes sense even of the most difficult days and gives lots of hope. The more so His help. This is the real miracle! And I believe that miracles happen to everyone, I just can see them, because a body part of mine (it's not clear which one) is set to catch signs and notice miracles. It might be intuition. But these signs help me live. That's for sure.

For me, God is alive. And I believe in a personal God.

The Shape of God

In every religion, the existence of God takes its own form. The word «form» is very important. The fact is that it does not necessarily stand for the material form, it is also a spiritual form. God exists in a form that can be understood by people. This is my concept. And at this point, I do not see alternatives to it. My mind is also part of our system that describes the world, so I cannot say that my concept is absolutely correct, because it still exists within the given form. Of course, the truth can be completely different, incommunicable, unknowable. But for myself, in my mind, everything I do and think corresponds with my concept. It makes my life easier. And what is it really like?

The peculiarity of Christianity is that God is separated from a man. A father and his sons and daughters. We stand apart from God. He acts as a person in this world. And in this world, this concept is normal. It has the right to exist. God is separate from a man. On the other hand, He is actually separate, because He is a «non-emptiness», and we do not feel like that. A man is separated from the «non-emptiness».

God is not existence, neither it is goodness, God becomes visible in creation. God manifests Himself in creation. This is how He manifests Himself and becomes visible. Thus, a small part of Him becomes visible in creation, in the material world. But what He is like, what He is, we cannot say.

God can be approached through ecstasy in prayer, liturgy, and other sacraments of religious service. Anyway, we have no other way. But it is crucial that we constantly try to approach God. If you are lucky, you will succeed a little. Therefore, the word «approach» is used for this process, that means approximately, partially become closer.

Surely we cannot get into a better contact with God, at least in our life, in our material world. Maybe in another world, in another spiritual dimension, we will do it? Having overcome the wheel of samsara, let's say, unite with Him again. People are looking for different ways to feel the approach: through prayer, ecstasy, LSD, yoga. We are trying to get closer all the time. This desire is naturally inherent in us.

And for me, Christianity is not a philosophy, it is a process of communication with the living God. Many perceive Christianity as a religion, as a certain code. In fact, true Christianity has no rules at all. It may simply be in a person's soul. That is, you can be a Christian without observing any rules. If you are a Christian in your heart, then you are fundamentally Christian.

«Every soul is a Christian», said Quintus Tertullian, one of the outstanding early Christian writers and theologians, hundreds of years ago. In the emerging theology, Tertullian first expressed the doctrine of the Trinity. He laid the foundation for Latin patristics and Church Latin – the language of medieval Western ideas.

Apparently, not every soul is a Christian, but in essence, yes, the words are true. The soul is a Christian in its striving for God, in its desire to help others. It is only important that these impulses, these movements, be sincere.

In terms of soul, Orthodoxy is closer to me than other Christianity. It is the most mystical religion, closer even to Buddhism and Judaism than to Catholicism or Protestantism. Of course, it is very canonical, everything in it is according to the rules. Christian mystics say that God is one and only, and there are no material things or events. Exactly what Buddhism tells us about. Subject and object are not different, they are the same.

In Buddhism, man is God. He also exists, He is also there. There is the God, and there is a man. I tend to support this idea – God and man are one. Everything is one, because everything is interconnected. Is a man separated from this one unity? From the world? From the universe? Of course not. He is right there. He cannot be separated. He is also God, only a small one, a very simple one. But he is also God. I believe that this «non-emptiness» applies to absolutely everything. That is why it all links together when we try to explain synchronicities. We understand them as something that we ourselves create.

We ourselves create these synchronicities by coming into contact with «non-emptiness». We create all these signs ourselves, therefore they do not show up to people who do not believe in them. Because when we believe in something, we create it by the power of faith. Atheists essentially never wonder: «What is the world?» Surprisingly enough, they are not interested in the world and the way it works. They evade this question. They pretend that the question does not exist at all. But it does. People ask it every day. We live on a beautiful planet without asking ourselves how our planet was formed. In my opinion, atheism equals laziness. It represents the reluctance and fear, among other things, to try to find answers to your questions. This is scary. Atheists are afraid to know the truth, even to come closer to this truth. I feel sorry for atheists – they don't ask themselves questions because they're afraid of answers. After all, no one knows for sure what the truth is. And the process of searching is eternal. We will never answer all our questions, because it is simply not an option. But I am sad to realize that there are atheists who lock themselves only in the material world.

God's Names

There is a God, and He appears in many different forms and faces. We see only our world – one of the billions of faces. We do not see the rest, because we are not ready for the rest. It's like the many names of God in Judaism. My respect for Judaism has grown stronger, because it goes deeper. Different names of God are a good idea. Of course, Judaism speaks a worldly language, and speaking of different names for God, it means different incarnations of God, different religions – Christianity, Islam, and so on. But when I say «names of God», I want to go even deeper. God can have names that we don't even have an idea of. He can embody a completely different way of living. Moreover, God is unknowable, He has no name. Therefore, in Hinduism, it is forbidden to call God by name. There is neither a word nor a thought to express the God's name. It is an amazing concept that God cannot even be thought of. God is described in negation, through enumeration of what He is not. There is even such a thing as negative theology. There is no need to think about God, for He is unknowable anyway. What a deep thought we have here. Thuswise we are reminded that God is the unknowable. And there is no point even trying to know Him. No one, of course, says that it is impossible to know Him. It is not prohibited. Still, it is impossible to know Him truly. Only the path of knowledge, like mine, is possible – but look, Hinduism warns me and other seekers that our search will get us nowhere. At least in this lifetime.

Different Religions

In every duality there is a hidden reserve. We operate on a binary system. Zeros and ones is a programming language. Computer technologies are built on zeroes and ones, on duality. That is, one thing is «yes», the other thing is «no». We certainly live in duality, we live in a binary system. All our actions and events exist in the binary system: black and white, good and evil, God and devil, up and down. Buddhism has is an absolutely categorical concept – duality is always one and endowed with hidden qualities, like two sides of the same coin.

Until recently, I had the impression that Christianity was beautiful, its parables were wise and wonderful. If I go deeper into Zen Buddhism, what do I do with Christianity? As if you can only choose one thing. I imagined Christianity at the bottom – in the foundation of everything. I saw Zen Buddhism at the top. Visually, I imagined two religions like that. And then in my head, Christianity and Buddhism could coexist simultaneously, they ceased to contradict each other, because one is below and the other is above, they complement one another.

Why do I have Christianity at the bottom and not at the top? Because it is about our worldly life. All Christian parables tell stories of material world, real events. And Zen Buddhism claims there is no reality, so I ended up with it at the top. One religion does not continue another, they go in parallel, like two sides of the same coin.

The same can be said about other religions: Islam, Hinduism. They are all at the bottom because they are talking about material things. Islam is practically Christianity with a few changes. Hinduism, of course, hovers above Christianity a little. It is passionate. It's like, let's say, a fabulous religion. Various branches of Christianity also show us, tell us about life in the material world.

Different religions, each telling in its own way about material life prove to me that the world is one. There cannot be a hundred religions and a hundred worlds. But when, for example, the orthodox say that their faith is the truth, it stirs up my resentment. This seems untrue to me. Their faith reflects the picture of the world as their community sees it. These are all cultural aspects that reduce everyone to one single world, and people tell about it under the influence of cultural differences. There can only be one world. At least the other world is not shown to us yet.

Just like about a struggle for power, I am sceptical about the disagreement between the conceptual Orthodox and Catholics, Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Christians. We all live in the only common world. We all turn to God, albeit calling it by different names, different words. How many people enthusiastically delve into the word sense? Etymology is an extremely interesting field, it tells us where certain words come from, what they mean. Take, for example, the word «Lord». This word has another meaning – ruler. We perceive God as ruler. In our language, God is a ruler. And the ruler is the one whom people obey and serve. But this is actually a lie. God gives us so many freedoms! Therefore, for myself, I gave up on the word «Lord». I feel God as my friend, I listen to him, but I do not want to obey God like a slave, meekly, without understanding. Here is another phrase – «servant of God» – which I stay off.

I do not consider myself equal to God, God is above everything. I believe in God, I firmly believe that there is Something that leads us through life. This is my religion, it may be wrong. But God should be called by some other word, which shows if not particularly equal, but good neighbourly relations. Or some word that shows that God is not our ruler, that He leads us, helps us. But He is not our lord. That's what I think.

What Do I Think of When I Look at the Mother of God?

Countless times have you seen a woman holding the body of her murdered son in her arms. We look at her in hushed silence and feel all the heaviness of the weight in her hands. She devotes herself to him – a mother mourns her son. Still, we look at icons, frescoes, statues, and we know that She is the Mother of God. She has the King of Heaven in her arms. She is the Queen of Heaven. On

any icons, even the most ancient ones, you will not find Her look otherwise than royal. She is always young and queenlike. He is always young and kinglike.

However, not long ago, I saw this scene in a very different way. I saw and understood for the first time with all my soul that the Mother of God is, first of all, a mother. She was his mom. And her son was killed. He died in terrible suffering, before her eyes. I saw that this well-known story is a real tragedy. I looked at the Virgin Mary and saw a woman, a mother whose son had died. Her child, her boy was killed. This struck me to the core.

I felt the human maternal pain of the Mother of God. I involuntarily imagined what a nightmare it would be if this happened to me. What a terrible thought.

Who Was Jesus?

It is believed that Jesus got his cosmic consciousness by way of trial. And here I am asking a question: was He a man, that is, a human with special powers, or was He a different essence? It is known that for thirty-three years, Jesus stayed in the form of a man and possessed powers and abilities. Because He, for example, could feed five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fishes. That is what a parable from the Gospel of John tells us. But, on the other hand, all His abilities may turn out to be a myth, a metaphor. Or they may not. We don't know. And we'll never know it because it happened a long time ago. We can only trust the Bible and say that since it is written in the book, it really was the case.

But is it really so?

I understand the story of Jesus not as a myth. I might be wrong. But when I read the Bible, I have the feeling that if He was a man, He was very different from how they describe Him. Or is Jesus a spiritual person? The God? British philosopher, writer and lecturer Alan Watts believes that Jesus was a man who actually lived. That is, it is not a myth. At the same time, Alan Watts is not a Christian believer. The main thing, in my opinion, is that Jesus gave humanity a lot. All the parables about Jesus are amazing, brilliant. It doesn't matter who made them up. It is important that parables exist, that they are absolutely right and help us live.

When I come to confession, I always say the same thing – about my weak faith, and how sceptical I am. Weak faith is my ordeal. I don't truly believe in Jesus Christ the way He is described in the Bible, in the three-day resurrection. The concept of resurrection confuses me. I don't believe that He rose on the third day. But, on the other hand, maybe we are talking here about reincarnation? Maybe this is the way the Bible introduces us to reincarnation?

When I say «weak faith», I'm talking about the lack of faith in the Christian sense; I don't believe enough in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in His existence. I have doubts. When I confess my lack of faith, priests always answer me: «That's okay. Almost everyone has doubts, because no one knows the truth, no one has seen how it really was».

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