

# “THE TROUBLED SOUL of LEO TELSTOY”

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**A friend of mine in a recent sermon quoted** the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian author and philosopher **Leo Tolstoy** (1828-1910): “*Is there any meaning in life that my inevitable death will not destroy?*” I found it to be quite a provocative statement, so later that week I began a short study of the man. Tolstoy was born into along line of aristocratic Russian nobility... his father **Count Tolstoy** was a Lieutenant Colonel... his mother died when he was just two years old while giving birth to his sister... his father’s distant cousin, who had already lived with them and helped run the household, raised the children and oversaw their tutoring. The Tolstoy estate was located in the Tula Region countryside of central Russia. Their house was a bustling household, with extended family members and friends often visiting for dinner or staying for days at a time. The children and adults played the piano, put on plays, sang Russian and Gypsy folk songs and read stories and poetry aloud. A voracious reader, Leo would visit his father in his study as he read and smoked his pipe. The family home today has been preserved as a State Memorial and National Preserve — it still contains the library they had of over twenty thousand books in more than thirty languages.

Count Tolstoy died when Leo was just eight ears old, and Leo had a hard time accepting this inevitability of life... thus producing his first spiritual questionings. His father’s sister (Aunt Aline) became the children’s guardian... she died five years later when Leo was thirteen. Leo then traveled with his two brothers to Kazan where their next guardians lived... it was there that Leo started preparations for the entrance examinations to Kazan University... at the age of sixteen he entered the university and began studying the languages of Arabic, Turkish, Latin, German, English, and French, as well as geography, history, and religion, and the great literary works of English, Russian and French authors. Though he did not graduate beyond his second year, Leo became a polyglot with at least a working knowledge of a dozen languages. Following his university studies he became caught up in the life of a young nobleman, traveling between the family estate, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Though Leo was baptized and brought up in the Russian Orthodox Church, by the time he left the university he no longer believed in many of things he had been taught. He states in his work “*Confession*” — “I had never believed very seriously but had merely trusted in what I was taught, though this trust was very unstable.... [He thus concluded that] religious teaching, which is accepted on trust and sustained by external pressure, gradually weakens under the influence of knowledge and experience of life that stands in opposition to the religious doctrines.” Tolstoy said that though he no longer believed in what he had been taught as a child, “he did believe in something, without being able to say what it was — I believed in God, or rather I did not deny God, but what kind of God I could not have said; neither did I reject Christ or his teachings, but what I understood by the teachings again I could not have said.” Following his university years, he became addicted to alcohol... he associated with various characters of ill-repute (that his Aunt repeatedly warned him about)... and he became addicted to gambling that resulted in his racking up huge debts, which caused him to sell off parts of his estate. To his Aunt and a few other confidants he often confessed his remorse when sober and wrote in his diary, “*I am living a completely brutish life.... I have abandoned almost all my occupations and have greatly fallen in spirit.*”

Writes Tolstoy: “I longed with all my soul to be good, but I was young; I had passions and I was alone, completely alone in my search for goodness. Every time I tried to display my innermost desires — a wish to be morally good — I met with contempt and scorn, and as soon as I gave in to base desires I was praised and encouraged [by my peers]. Ambition, the lust for power, self-interest, lechery, pride, anger, revenge, were all respected qualities. As I yielded to these passions I became like my elders and I felt that they were pleased with me. I cannot recall those years without horror, loathing, and heartache. During a brief stint in the army, I killed people in war... summoned others in duels in order to kill them, gambled at cards... I fornicated, practiced deceit, and devoured the fruits of the peasant’s labor and punished them. Lying, thieving, promiscuity of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder... there was not a crime I did not commit, and yet I was praised for it all and my contemporaries considered, and still consider me, a relatively moral man. Through my association with these men I acquired a new vice: an unhealthily developed pride, and an insane conviction that it was my vocation to teach people without really knowing what I was teaching. At the time we were all convinced that we must talk and talk and write and publish as quickly and as much as possible, and that this was all necessary for the good of mankind. Failing to notice that we knew nothing, that we did not know the answer to the most basic question of life — what is good and what is evil — we all indulged and praised each other in order to be indulged and praised in return.”

Tolstoy goes on to say that, “Thousands of workers toiled day and night, assembling millions and millions of words, which were distributed by post over the whole of Russia. Our genuine, sincere concern was over how to gain as much money and fame as possible — the only thing we knew how to do in order to achieve this aim was to write books and journals. But in order for us to pursue this utterly useless task and have the assurance that we were very important people, we needed an argument that would justify what we were doing — so we devised this one: Everything that exists is rational and all that exists evolves... and it evolves through enlightenment (hence through books and journals). And so I lived, abandoning myself to this madness.”

At the age of twenty-three Leo seized the opportunity to change his life, and moved with one of his brothers to the Caucasus Region at the southern edge of Russia, where he met the simple folk who populated the area. Having long corresponded with his Aunts, he now turned his pen to writing fiction — his first novel of his autobiographical trilogy, “*Childhood*,” was highly lauded, thus encouraging Tolstoy to continue with “*Boyhood*” and “*Youth*.” Leo’s two brothers passed away while he was in his late twenties... it was at this time that he set off on travels throughout Western Europe. By this time “*Childhood*” had been translated into English and Tolstoy had become a well-known author; he enjoyed a Count’s life as a bachelor, where he vacillated between bouts of sobriety and debauchery — such was his life for about ten years. But times were to change and things were soon to rapidly settle... Leo fell in love and got married at the age of thirty-four... ultimately, he and his wife “Sonya” bore eleven children.

Many people today are often surprised at the renowned accomplishments of “young people” in past centuries, but it was not at all uncommon for young men to distinguish themselves at an early age — people frequently married at the age of 14, and died by the time they were in their 40’s. **Alexander the Great** became the King of Persia at the age of 25, and conquered the then known world by the time he was 33... **Sir Isaac Newton** began developing a new branch of mathematics at the age of 20... **Thomas Edison** created his first invention, an electric vote recorder at the age of 21... **Napoleon Bonaparte** conquered Italy at the age of 26... **Benjamin Franklin** published

the first edition of *Poor Richard's Almanac*... **Albert Einstein** published five major research papers in a German physics journal at the age of 26, fundamentally changing man's view of the universe and leading to such inventions as television and the atomic bomb... **Winston Churchill** had authored three best selling books by the time he was 26... **William Tnydale** translated and printed the New Testament into English at the age of 29. **Johannes Kepler** defended the Copernican theory and described the structure of the solar system at the age of 24... Obviously, space doesn't permit to give a more exhaustive list of "famous young achievers," so here are just a few more names you may also want to reflect upon: Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Mozart, Charles Lindbergh, John Wesley and Eli Whitney... and then there are those "high tech saints" in today's world: **Bill Gates** cofounded *Microsoft* at the age of 20... **Steve Jobs** cofounded *Apple Inc.* at the age of 21... **Mark Zuckerberg**, the creator of *Facebook*, was named "*Person of the Year*" by Time Magazine at the age of 26. Oh, in case you forgot, the **Lord Jesus** conquered Satan, sin, death and the grave at the age of 33.

In 1862 at the age of thirty-five, Tolstoy plunged into his epic book "*War and Peace*" — its six volumes were published between 1863 and 1869. At the age of forty-five he started writing his next epic work, "*Anna Karenina*." These two books garnered international acclaim — in 2007, "*Anna Karenina*" and "*War and Peace*" were placed on *Time Magazine's* ten greatest novels of all time, first and third place respectively.

In 1878, at the age of fifty, Tolstoy suffered the most intense bout of self-doubt and spiritual introspection yet — he became severely depressed, even suicidal... his usually rational outlook on life became muddled with what he thought was a morally upright life as husband and father. He harshly examined his motives and criticized himself for his egotistical family cares, concern for the increase of wealth, the attainment of literary success, and the enjoyment of every kind of pleasure. Tolstoy wrote his "*Confessions*" — "I was not yet fifty; I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved, good children, and a large estate which without much effort on my part improved and increased. I was praised by others and without much self-deception could consider that my name was famous." It was at that point that Tolstoy (1879) began "*the last period of my awakening to the truth which has given me the highest well-being in life and joyous peace in view of approaching death.*" A number of his non-fiction articles and novels outlining his ideology and harshly criticizing the government and church followed... with the publication of "*Resurrection*" in 1901. At the age of seventy-three, Tolstoy was excommunicated by the *Russian Orthodox Church*, but his popularity with the public was unwavering... by this time he now had a large following of disciples devoted to "*Tolstoyism*."

One of Tolstoy's most significant followers was a wealthy army officer named **Vladimir Chertkov** (1854-1910). Having embraced the pacifist doctrine of non-resistance as per the teachings of Jesus as outlined in the gospels, Tolstoy gave up meat, tobacco, alcohol and preached chastity. When **Mahatma Gandhi** read his work, "*The Kingdom of God is Within You*," he was profoundly moved and wrote to Tolstoy regarding the *Passive Resistance* movement. They started a correspondence and soon became friends. Admiring the ideals of a simple life of hard work, living off the land, and following the teachings of Jesus, Tolstoy offered his friendship and moral and financial support to the *Doukhobors* (a Christian sect severely persecuted in Russia) — many Tolstoyans assisted them in their mass emigration to Canada in 1899. Tolstoy was involved with many other causes including appealing to the Tsar to avoid civil war at all costs.

At the age of seventy-five (1903), Tolstoy wrote in his diary that he still struggled with his identity, where he had come from and who he had become. Writes Tolstoy: “I am now suffering the torments of hell: I am calling to mind all the infamies of my former life; these reminiscences do not pass away and they poison my existence... what a happiness that one’s memory is not retained after death... what an anguish it would be if I remembered in this life all the evil, all that is painful to the conscience, committed by me in a previous life... what a happiness that reminiscences disappear with death and that there only remains consciousness.” As the last days of Tolstoy played out, he still at times agonized over his self-worth and regretted his actions from decades earlier. Having renounced his ancestral claim to his estate and all of his worldly goods, he was intent on starting a new life and did so on October 28, 1910, at the age of eighty-two. Tolstoy died a month later of pneumonia. Although he wanted no ceremony or ritual, thousands showed up to pay their respects... he was buried in a simple wooden coffin on the Yasnya Polyana estate.

## **Tolstoy’s Questioning and Reasoning**

Tolstoy wrote in his “*Confessions*” that he frequently said to himself, “Perhaps I have overlooked something, or misunderstood something? It cannot be that this condition of despair is natural to man! I sought for an explanation of these problems in all the branches of knowledge acquired by men... I sought painfully and persistently day and night... and I found nothing. I sought in all the sciences, but far from finding what I wanted, became convinced that all who like myself had sought in knowledge for the meaning of life had found nothing. And not only had they found nothing, but they had plainly acknowledged that the very thing which made me despair — mainly the senselessness of life — is the one indubitable thing man can know. I sought [answers] everywhere; and thanks to a life spent in learning... and to my relations with the scholarly world, I had access to scientists and scholars in all branches of knowledge, and they readily showed me all their knowledge, not only in books but also in conversation, so that I had at my disposal all that science has to say on this question of life. I was long unable to believe that it gives no other reply to life’s questions than that which it actually does give.... the matter for me was not a game or an amusement, but one of life and death, and I was involuntarily brought to the conviction that my questions were the only legitimate ones.”

Writes Tolstoy: “My question — that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide — was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man... it was a question without an answer to which one cannot live, as I had found by experience. It was this: ‘What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? What will come of my whole life? Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything? [In summary], ‘Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?’ To this one question, I sought an answer in science. I found that one group of sciences (the experimental sciences) does not seem to even recognize the question... and the other group of sciences (the abstract sciences) recognizes the question, but does not answer it. [Though] those sciences are very interesting and attractive... the more they try to reply to the question of life, the more obscure and unattractive they become. If one turns to the division of sciences which attempt to reply to the questions of life — to biology, physiology, psychology, sociology — one encounters an appalling poverty of thought, the greatest obscurity.... If one turns to the branches of science which are not concerned with the solution of the questions of life, one is enraptured by the power of man’s mind, but one knows in advance that they give no reply to life’s questions. Those sciences simply ignore life’s questions.... And I

understood that as in the experimental sciences there are real sciences, and semi-sciences which try to give answers to questions beyond their competence... these semi-sciences are filled with obscurities, inexactitudes, stupidities, and contradictions the further they diverge from the real problems.... [Furthermore], the labors of real philosophy merely try to state the question of the essence of existence clearly — What am I, and what is the universe? — but to the question ‘Why?’ they have no answer. So instead of an answer one only gets the same question, but in a more complex form.”

## **Tolstoy discovers the “Meaning of Life”**

Tolstoy’s account of the meaning of life, as related in his essay, “*Confession*,” revolves around a story he relates early in the essay about a traveler who jumps into a well to escape an “infuriated beast” that has been pursuing him, only to find that there is a “dragon” at the bottom of the well. The traveler can go neither up or down, so he grabs hold of a twig growing in a cleft of the well, effectively placing him in limbo between the infuriated beast above and the nefarious dragon below. Then much to his dismay, he sees two mice nibbling on the twig. All seems lost, but then the traveler notices a “*few drops of honey*” at the end of the twig... thus he begins licking the honey. Here, Tolstoy lends voice to what it means to be human and to wrestle with our own finitude. He shows us how we, in an effort to avoid looking at the death that awaits us, seek any “*available pleasure*” to anesthetize and assuage our fears. These drops of honey of course do not only refer to immediate pleasure, but to anything that is calculated to set up some future pleasure as well — in other words, the drops of honey include *everything* we do.

It should be noted, even those of us who believe in eternal life are all too familiar with this “*existential reality*,” this fear of our own earthly mortality and this desire to find some sort of pleasure by which we can avoid facing the realities of our temporal time on earth. We all have done – and continue to do – so many things that, though we may never be aware of it in the moment, are designed to bolster confidence in our immediate identity, so as to quiet the fears about our future identity. In other words, while hanging from the tenuous twig of life, we search frantically for new sources of honey (pleasure). Think of all the things you do “*every day*” to bring a degree of pleasure, satisfaction and fulfillment to your life — those are the “*drops of honey*” in Tolstoy’s parable. At the end of the day, however, when we are thinking straight, it is important that we be able to “*thank God that He is the ultimate source of honey in our lives*,” and that while some deride this mentality as the recourse of a weak person, of a person who needs to use “God” as a crutch, we can actually take joy and solace in the fact that, at the very root, if approached with a humble and pure heart, that is precisely what God intended human life to be. As King Solomon wrote, “We are not to ‘*lean*’ on our own understanding, but ‘*trust*’ in the Lord” (the words ‘*lean*’ and ‘*trust*’ are the same word in Hebrew; the word literally means “to lean upon with all your weight;” cf. Prov 3:5-6). The reality is this: to deny the utter and absolute need of God in all things is to be the most belligerent fool of all, for such a person will one day no longer even be able to “lick the drops of honey” at the end of the twig... at that point, there will only remain the eternal clutches of the dragon of hell.

Tolstoy goes on to say he continues to lick the honey which used to give him pleasure, but that it now no longer gives him joy... and the mice, day and night, continue to nibble at the branch onto which he is holding. He writes, “I clearly see the dragon, and the honey is no longer sweet to me.

I see only the inevitable dragon and the mice, and am unable to turn my glance away from them. This is not a fable, but a veritable, indisputable, comprehensible truth.” The “drops of honey” that Tolstoy formerly found sweet were his love of family and writing. But the realization of death results in a certain attitude that he cannot shake... basically he is left with the need to know the ultimate meaning of life.

There are those who say that even though life has no meaning we should try to snatch as much pleasure during our time on earth as we possibly can. But what they fail to realize is this: God is the *source* of peace and joy and fulfillment in life, and He withholds it from those who refuse to trust in Him. The truth is, people often find that as they grow older the pleasures that had once brought a measure of joy to them now become tedious, unfulfilling and unexciting. That’s why King Solomon at the end of his life concluded: “All things are wearisome, man is not able to tell it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing” (Ecc 1:8)... “I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity” (Ecc 2:11)... “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is this: fear God and keep His commandments, because God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecc 12:13-14). Interestingly enough, we don’t have to go to ancient scripture to read about the frustration that inevitably engulfs a “*pleasure-oriented life*” — more recently, a contemporary rock star who could freely indulge in every conceivable pleasure sang, “*I can’t get no satisfaction.*” Whoever says that we can gain some degree of real happiness by pursuing pleasure — whether of carnal, intellectual or aesthetic kind — is simply lying and fooling himself. No sane person can deny the voice of reality when it speaks to the heart.

## **Tolstoy finds the answer in “Faith”**

After a long and agonizing struggle, Tolstoy finally overcame his despondency by finding transcendence in God. *Somewhere in his heart he knew that life is not meaningless and that it does matter how we live.*... he knew that there is good and evil (remember, scripture tells us that God has written His law on the hearts of men)... he knew there was a world of difference between a Mother Theresa and an Adolf Hitler... he knew that love excels hate... he knew it is better to be a good person than to be a bad person; thus, in the end, he tried to be the “*best person*” he could possibly be. This knowledge and these intuitions are common to all sane men... atheism is simply the product of a stubborn and rebellious heart that is at war with itself — every day the atheist denies his hypothetical worldview by his own actions and way of life. Ultimately, Leo Tolstoy acknowledged he was God’s creature, and that God is the source of all life, goodness and meaning. This is how he described his great decision in his book “*Confession*” — “*I returned to a belief in God, in moral perfection, and in a tradition transmitting the meaning of life.*” I find it interesting that even though Tolstoy was already considered the greatest living writer, he was not ashamed to confess his mistakes and personal insufficiency before the Creator of the universe.

Tolstoy offered a personal account to answer the question of the meaning of life. He asserted that meaning can’t be found in fleeting human goods, nor can it be found in scientific and mathematical knowledge of the physical world... he asserted that “*faith alone*” gives humanity a purpose in life; that the “*knowledge of faith*” is the only knowledge that has the advantage of relating the finite to the infinite — though “faith based answers” still seemed irrational to him to a degree, he couldn’t deny the fact that faith alone had provided answers for humanity throughout the course of time. So

Tolstoy concluded that as long as a man believes in something, he has a reason to live. He writes, *“Faith in the notion that the question of whether or not meaning in life can be found is necessary, before one can live with the satisfaction of having found that meaning. Thus, regardless of how irrational and arbitrary faith provided answers seem, they still provide meaning in a world full of questions.”* To Tolstoy, the knowledge of faith is *intuitive perception* — the eye of intuitive perception sees past the limitations of human knowledge. “No matter what answers faith may give,” he writes, “its every answer gives to the finite existence of man the sense of the infinite; a sense which is not destroyed by suffering, privation and death. Consequently, in faith alone can we find the meaning and possibility of life... faith is the knowledge of the meaning of life.” Tolstoy says, “No matter how I put the question, ‘How must I live?’ the answer is, ‘According to God’s Laws.’ What real result will there be from my life? Eternal torment or eternal bliss. What is the meaning which is not destroyed by death? — the union with infinite God, paradise.”

To give an honest critique of Tolstoy’s *“conversion,”* it is important to note that he did not come full circle regarding the *“essential doctrines of Christianity”* — For him, Jesus was not the “Son of God,” nor did He perform any supernatural miracles. Tolstoy was convinced that these superstitious stories in the Bible had been added by the church in order to keep “Christians” hypnotized enough to ensure that they did not question the unjustifiable compromise that the Church had reached with the State. He was convinced that an honest and full application of Christianity [as he defined it] could only lead to a stateless and churchless society, and that all those who argued to the contrary were devious hypocrites ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bright/tolstoy/chrisanar.htm](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/tolstoy/chrisanar.htm)).

Tolstoy arrived at his conclusions when he made a trip to a distant Russian province — it was at this time that he wrestled intensely with the meaning of life... no where could he find anything that gave meaning and value to life. Then the breakthrough came... he observed that the peasants around him — which as a proud aristocrat he had hitherto overlooked — seemed to approach death with calm and serenity. But why? What was it that helped them remain so serene in the face of the apparent futility of life? Tolstoy realized that what they had was *“faith.”* This intrigued him and gave him hope. So he plunged into the Bible with renewed enthusiasm, in the hope that the meaning of life would finally be disclosed to him — and this time, it was. The revelation came to him as he reflected upon Jesus’ words in the *“Sermon on the Mount.”* This passage, Tolstoy declared, is ***What I Believe***... it at once unlocked the whole meaning of the Bible for him, and with this his existential anxiety at last came to rest. The passage to which Tolstoy referred is this:

*You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any one wants to sue you, take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*  
(Matt 5:38-42)

For Tolstoy, the implications of these instructions were nothing short of revolutionary. *Jesus was proposing a new, radical and wiser method for human beings to respond to any form of “evil.”* That is, when coerced or when treated unjustly, do not retaliate, but respond with love, forgiveness and generosity. Tolstoy reflected on Jesus’ advice and observed that mankind has always been caught in a vicious cycle of “tit-for-tat evil and violence.” Human beings constantly try to resist evil with evil, to deal violently with problems of violence, to wage war to preclude another war.

But such responses succeed only in spreading bitterness, anger and resentment — and all that this guarantees is further evil and suffering further down the line. The only remedy to this vicious cycle of violence, Tolstoy now realized, was to juxtapose to it the virtuous cycle of love so well articulated by Jesus. The destructive cycle of evil, anger and revenge can only be overpowered by a patient cycle of love, forgiveness and sacrifice. Though turning the cheek does mean more suffering in the short term, the hope is that eventually, the evildoer will repent and change his ways... for just as violence is contagious, so too is love. Thus Tolstoy concluded that “only love can eventually bring about a society bound by charity, peace and love... and that love can only be taught by example.” Tolstoy said, “This requires courage, because even when persecuted unjustly, the follower of Christ must patiently love and forgive — even when the ultimate price to pay is death (or crucifixion!).” For Tolstoy, that was the essence of Jesus’ teaching to humanity; it is what Jesus taught throughout His ministry, and it is what He enacted in His very life and death.

Furthermore, wrote Tolstoy, “If Christians actually acted as Jesus taught them to — if they governed their social interactions through love, forgiveness and charity — then there would be no need for a state” (i.e., a “governing force” that imposes its laws through economic slavery); thus Tolstoy concluded that the state was an ungodly, unchristian institution — because the state directly contravenes Jesus’ clear advice... and because if Jesus’ recommendations were put into practice, then the state would become obsolete. Tolstoy believed the official church betrayed Christianity by hypocritically cuddling with state power; thus Tolstoy is as scathing of the church as of the state. He accused church and state authorities of conspiring to maintain their hold on power... he felt the church had betrayed Jesus’ teachings by choosing to focus on rituals and superstitions rather than on the central message summarized in the *Sermon on the Mount*. For the last thirty years of his life, Tolstoy relentlessly wrote numerous books, articles and pamphlets on religion and politics in the hope that it could help awaken his fellow Christians to the true essence of Christianity — his writings were published abroad and circulated both in Russia and elsewhere. So Tolstoy became an important international figure at the turn of the century, even though today, we only really remember him for the novels he wrote before he “converted” to Christianity.

Obviously, Tolstoy’s interpretation of the metaphysics behind this “much neglected teaching of Jesus,” remains unacceptable to the believing Christian community today — his rejection of the “deity” of Christ is what separates him from the truth of the gospel. Sadly, Tolstoy simply saw Jesus as the most rational human teacher who ever lived, rather than “the Son of God” who redeemed sinners at the cross and made them brand new creations, and whose body was resurrected and flown back into heaven. Thus Tolstoy simply reduced religion (Christianity) to “morality.” The point is this: he did, however, find some sort of “meaning of life” in his rationalistic understanding of Christianity — he was thus able to see a purpose in life, which was to strive to live up to Jesus’ teachings, to respond to all evil by overcoming it through the contagious power of love. This, he thought, would be the only way to achieve further progress in human relations (his ultimate concern). So Tolstoy’s contribution to contemporary Christian anarchistic literature remains valuable in that he brings attention to the neglected political implications of the *Sermon on the Mount*... and on this topic, he wrote well and he wrote a lot. But his rejection of the deity of Christ, the redemption of the cross, and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life, simply made Tolstoy just another “moral voice” crying in the wilderness.