

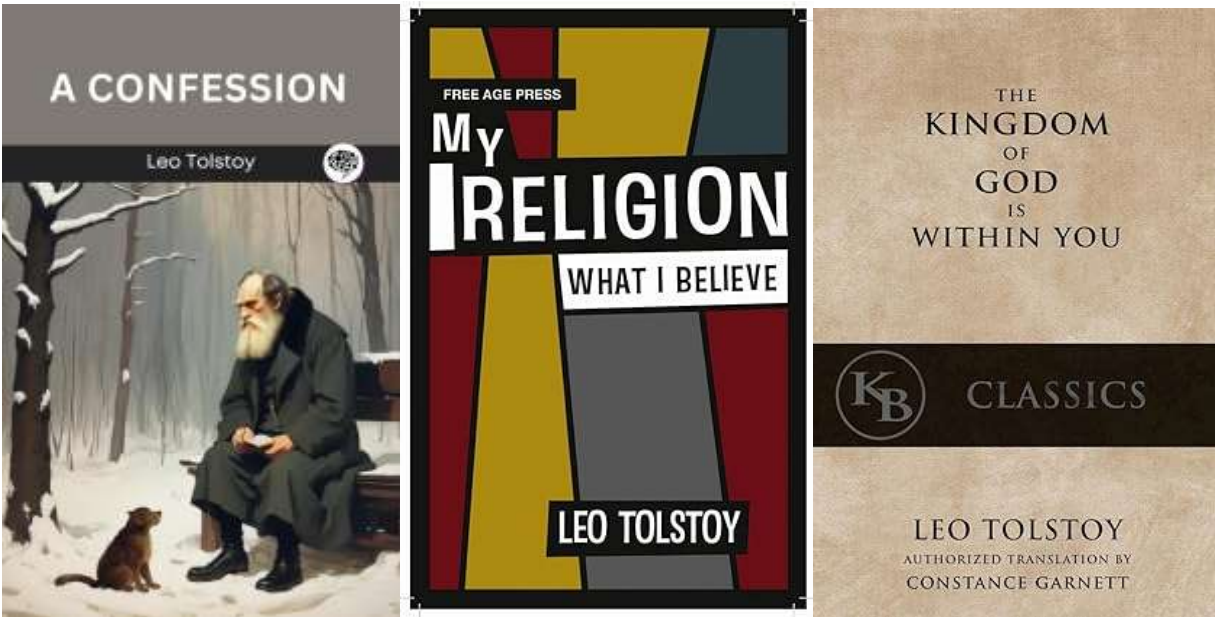
## Chapter 1

In order to lay the groundwork for this historical project, I was forced to look back across the annals of time and space to the entire Christian era, which is recorded in the sacred scriptures known collectively as the Bible (especially the New Testament). Such a perspective included scriptural knowledge of Christ's teachings (especially the Sermon on the Mount), and a rudimentary understanding of Church history (especially the Russian Orthodox and the Protestant branches of Christianity).

As a Bible scholar, having attended Bethany Bible College, I was well versed in the doctrines of the Christian religion. Furthermore, I enjoyed reading literature from English, America and Russian authors. One Russian author stood out for me during my college years – Leo Tolstoy. His world-renowned “War and Peace” and other works ignited an interest in his stirring plots and historical depictions. However, it was only later that I learned that Tolstoy had also devoted his later years to writing about religious subjects and spiritual truths. One of the books – My Religion, What I Believe – actually summed up his quest for understanding all the nuances of the Christian religion that surrounded him in Russia. The other book – The Kingdom of God is Within You --- was an excursion into the concept of the Golden Rule and the pacifist commandment given by Christ: “Resist not evil.” Non-violence seemed to be the main reason I was a Christian, for I had learned from my father that being a conscientious objector (i.e. being a Christian pacifist and opposed to killing, in war or in civilian life) was a serious commandment instituted by Christ when he stated, “Lay down the sword, for he who kills by the sword shall die by the sword.” My father had been persecuted for his evangelical belief that killing was wrong, and he was put in jail in the Soviet Union because he refused to kill for the state.

What I discovered during my upbringing in a Christian home and in Christian churches was that there appeared to be one absolute moral law in the universe: “Thou shalt not kill.” What that meant in Christian circles was another matter, as I discovered. Throughout my historical analysis and research of the Christian churches that I became familiar with during my life, I learned that various churches taught different versions of that moral law, which seemed to me to be a simple truth. The reason I am starting this historical project with the spiritual work published by a world-famous author named Leo Tolstoy is because I think that the thinking of the Christian movements that sprung up in Imperial Russia and in the former Soviet Union came from the minds of people like Tolstoy who were conscientiously thinking about what Christianity meant to them. People like Ivan Voronaev, who became a pioneer and leader for many evangelicals (Baptists and Pentecostals), were instrumental in laying down their weapons, leaving the army, and refusing to kill because they actually believed that was what Jesus wanted them to do to be his disciples. I will discuss Ivan Voronaev's exemplary life and work in the next chapter. My father and many others in this historical work followed the Christian path that Voronaev followed. I will share their life and work, also.

In this chapter, I start by examining what Leo Tolstoy himself said and wrote about Christianity. This will lay the groundwork for what follows. Here are excerpts from his spiritual works:



Amazon has all three books. Each book has a “free sample” to read. Here are Excerpts:

- (1) "A Confession" by Leo Tolstoy is a deeply personal and philosophical exploration of one man's existential crisis and spiritual awakening. In this profound work, Tolstoy candidly reflects on his own struggles with faith, morality, and the meaning of life. As one of the greatest novelists of all time grapples with his own doubts and uncertainties, he takes readers on a journey of introspection and soul-searching. Written with raw honesty and profound insight, "A Confession" offers a powerful meditation on the nature of existence and the quest for inner peace. Tolstoy's timeless reflections continue to resonate with readers, inviting them to confront their own deepest questions about faith, doubt, and the human condition.

I was baptized and brought up in the Orthodox Christian faith. I was taught it in childhood and throughout my boyhood and youth. But when I abandoned the second course of the university at the age of eighteen I no longer believed any of the things I had been taught.

Judging by certain memories, I never seriously believed them, but had merely relied on what I was taught and on what was professed by the grown-up people around me, and that reliance was very unstable.

- (2) 'My Religion' carries on from where 'A Confession' left off. Describing himself as a former nihilist, Tolstoy develops his attack on the church he has left. He accuses them of hiding the true meaning of Jesus, which is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount; and most clearly, in the call not to resist evil. For Tolstoy, it is this command which has been most damaged by ecclesiastical interpretation. 'Not everyone,' he writes, 'is able to understand the mysteries of dogmatics, homilectics, liturgics, hermeneutics, apologetics; but everyone is able and ought to understand what Christ said to the millions of simple and ignorant people who have lived and are living today.' Here is Tolstoy's religion; and non-violence is at its heart.
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### INTRODUCTION.

I AM five-and-fifty years old, and, with the exception of the fourteen or fifteen years of my childhood, I have been until recently a 'Nihilist' in the proper signification of that term. I have not been a Socialist or Revolutionist, but a Nihilist in the sense of being completely without faith.

Five years ago I began to believe in the doctrine of Christ, and in consequence a great change has been wrought in me. I now no longer care for the things which I had prized, and I have begun to desire things concerning which I had formerly been indifferent. Like a man who, going out on business, on his way suddenly becomes convinced of the futility of that business, and turns back; and all that stood to the right now stands to the left, and all that was to the left is now to the right; his wish to be as far from home as possible, is changed to the desire of being as near home as possible – so, I may say, the whole aim and purpose of my life has been changed; my desires are no more what

they have been: for me, good and evil have changed places. This experience came through my apprehending the doctrine of Christ in an altogether different way, and seeing it in a quite new light.

It is not my intention to interpret the doctrine of Christ, but simply to relate how I came to understand the simplest, clearest, and most intelligible point in that doctrine; and how, when once I had clearly grasped His meaning, it gave a new direction to all my thoughts.

I have no wish to interpret the doctrine of Christ, but I should like to prevent others from interpreting it wrongly. Christian churches generally acknowledge that all men, however they may differ from each other in knowledge or mental capacity, are equal before God; and that the truth revealed to man is accessible to all. Christ Himself has told us that the Father has hid some things 'from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.'

All men cannot be initiated into the mysteries of dogmatic, homiletic, patristic theologies, and so on; but all can

And so, after all this fruitless search and careful meditation over all that had been written for and against the divinity of the doctrine of Jesus, after all this doubt and suffering, I came back face to face with the mysterious Gospel message. I could not find the meanings that others found, neither could I discover what I sought. It was only after I had rejected the interpretations of the wise critics and theologians, according to the words of Jesus, *"Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt, xviii. 3) , it was only then that I suddenly understood what had been so meaningless before. I understood, not through exegetical fantasies or profound and ingenious textual combinations; I understood everything, because I put all commentaries out of my mind. This was the passage that gave me the key to the whole:

*"Ye have heard that it hath been said. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil."* (Matt. v. 38, 39.)

One day the exact and simple meaning of these words came to me; I understood that Jesus meant neither more nor less than what he said. What I saw was nothing new; only the veil that had hidden the truth from me fell away, and the truth was revealed in all its grandeur.

- (3) "The Kingdom of God is Within You" -- This culmination of Tolstoy's three decades of contemplation presents a unique societal structure based on a Christian interpretation centered on universal love.

Inspired by Luke 17:21, the book explores nonviolent resistance, pivotal for Tolstoyan followers of nonviolence and Christian anarchism. Tolstoy discusses the principle of nonviolent resistance in response to violence, asserting that Jesus Christ's directive to "turn the other cheek" means renouncing all forms of violence, including self-defense and revenge.

## Chapter I.

THE DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL BY FORCE HAS BEEN  
PROFESSED BY A MINORITY OF MEN FROM THE VERY FOUNDATION OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

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Of the Book "What I Believe"—The Correspondence Evoked by it—Letters from Quakers—Garrison's Declaration—Adin Ballou, his Works, his Catechism—Helchitsky's "Net of Faith"—The Attitude of the World to Works Elucidating Christ's Teaching—Dymond's Book "On War"—Musser's "Non-resistance Asserted"—Attitude of the Government in 1818 to Men who Refused to Serve in the Army—Hostile Attitude of Governments Generally and of Liberals to Those who Refuse to Assist in Acts of State Violence, and their Conscious Efforts to Silence and Suppress these Manifestations of Christian Non-resistance.

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Among the first responses called forth by my book were some letters from American Quakers. In these letters, expressing their sympathy with my views on the unlawfulness for a Christian of war and the use of force of any kind, the Quakers gave me details of their own so-called sect, which for more than two hundred years has actually professed the teaching of Christ on non-resistance to evil by force, and does not make use of weapons in self-defense. The Quakers sent me books, from which I learnt how they had, years ago, established beyond doubt the duty for a Christian of fulfilling the command of non-resistance to evil by force, and had exposed the error of the Church's teaching in allowing war and capital punishment.

In a whole series of arguments and texts showing that war—that is, the wounding and killing of men—is inconsistent with a religion founded on peace and good will toward men, the Quakers maintain and prove that nothing has contributed so much to the obscuring of Christian truth in the eyes of the heathen, and has hindered so much the diffusion of Christianity through the world, as the disregard of this command by men calling themselves Christians, and the permission of war and violence to Christians.

"Christ's teaching, which came to be known to men, not by means of violence and the sword," they say, "but by means of non-resistance to evil, gentleness, meekness, and peaceableness, can only be diffused through the world by the example of peace, harmony, and love among its followers."

"A Christian, according to the teaching of God himself, can act only peaceably toward all men, and therefore there can be no authority able to force the Christian to act in opposition to the teaching of God and to the principal virtue of the Christian in his relation with his neighbors."

"The law of state necessity," they say, "can force only those to change the law of God who, for the sake of earthly gains, try to reconcile the irreconcilable; but for a Christian



who sincerely believes that following Christ's teaching will give him salvation, such considerations of state can have no force."

Further acquaintance with the labors of the Quakers and their works—with Fox, Penn, and especially the work of Dymond (published in 1827)—showed me not only that the impossibility of reconciling Christianity with force and war had been recognized long, long ago, but that this irreconcilability had been long ago proved so clearly and so indubitably that one could only wonder how this impossible reconciliation of Christian teaching with the use of force, which has been, and is still, preached in the churches, could have been maintained in spite of it.

In addition to what I learned from the Quakers I received about the same time, also from America, some information on the subject from a source perfectly distinct and previously unknown to me.

The son of William Lloyd Garrison, the famous champion of the emancipation of the negroes, wrote to me that he had read my book, in which he found ideas similar to those expressed by his father in the year 1838, and that, thinking it would be interesting to me to know this, he sent me a declaration or proclamation of "non-resistance" drawn up by his father nearly fifty years ago.

This declaration came about under the following circumstances: William Lloyd Garrison took part in a discussion on the means of suppressing war in the Society for the Establishment of Peace among Men, which existed in 1838 in America. He came to the conclusion that the establishment of universal peace can only be founded on the open profession of the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by violence (Matt. v. 39), in its full significance, as understood by the Quakers, with whom Garrison happened to be on friendly relations. Having come to this conclusion, Garrison thereupon composed and laid before the society a declaration, which was signed at the time—in 1838—by many members.

#### "DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS ADOPTED BY PEACE CONVENTION."

Boston, 1838.

"We the undersigned, regard it as due to ourselves, to the cause which we love, to the country in which we live, to publish a declaration expressive of the purposes we aim to accomplish and the measures we shall adopt to carry forward the work of peaceful universal reformation.

"We do not acknowledge allegiance to any human government. We recognize but one King and Lawgiver, one Judge and Ruler of mankind. Our country is the world, our countrymen are all mankind. We love the land of our nativity only as we love all other lands. The interests and rights of American citizens are not dearer to us than those of the whole human race. Hence we can allow no appeal to patriotism to revenge any national insult or injury . . .

"We conceive that a nation has no right to defend itself against foreign enemies or to punish its invaders, and no individual possesses that right in his own case, and the unit cannot be of greater importance than the aggregate. If soldiers thronging from abroad with intent to commit rapine and destroy life may not be resisted by the people or the magistracy, then ought no resistance to be offered to domestic

The rest of the "free sample" can be found here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Kingdom-God-Within-You/dp/1537188488/>

In 1904, at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, Tolstoy began his essay “Bethink Yourselves!” with a frustrated cry for peace: “Again war. Again suffering, necessary to nobody, utterly uncalled for.” He deplores “states arming themselves against each other and ready to break out into wars”, and of “so-called civilised humanity” being carried towards “certain destruction”. With the development of nuclear weapons and a readiness to use them, certain destruction for masses of people, if not for the entire species, is now more likely than ever.

To support his main argument for non-resistance to violence, he drew from his own secular translation and interpretation of the Gospels— which he lays out most fully in his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Although he draws on the Gospels, Tolstoy rejected traditional supernatural beliefs in the divinity of Christ and eternal life after death, as well as miracles, icons, and pageantry. But he still uses the term “God”, and in the essay refers to pacifism as part of a “religious consciousness”.

He interprets “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15) to mean there is a “Higher Will” acting on and through us.

He is also indebted to the Gospels for a moral language that will give effect to a pacifist life. He draws in particular from the teachings in *The Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7). In “Bethink Yourselves!” he describes the teaching to treat others as we would like them to treat us as an “incontestable principle”, and he fully endorses the requirements to show love to our enemies, not hate, and to pray for those who persecute us. In *The Kingdom of God is Within You* he recognises that to live up to the tenets of Christian ethics is a huge challenge, especially to turn the other cheek and show love to an aggressor, and also to look to our own faults first and not judge others.

.....Two thousand years ago John the Baptist and then Jesus said to men: The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; (μετανοεῖτε) bethink yourselves and believe in the Gospel (Mark i. 15); and if you do not bethink yourselves you will all perish (Luke xiii. 5).....proposed by Jesus—that every man bethink himself, and ask himself, who is he, why he lives, and what he should and should not do.....not that religion which consists in belief in dogmas, in the fulfilment of rites which afford a pleasant diversion, consolation, stimulant, but that religion which establishes the relation of man to the All, to God, and, therefore, gives a general higher direction to all human activity, and without which people stand on the plane of animals and even lower than they.

But if it be true that the salvation of mankind from brutalization and self-destruction lies only in the establishment amongst men of that true religion which demands that we should love

our neighbor and serve him (with which it is impossible to disagree), then every war, every hour of war, and my participation in it, only renders more difficult and distant the realization of this only possible salvation. ....To love the yellow people, whom we call our foes, means, not to teach them under the name of Christianity absurd superstitions about the fall of man, redemption, resurrection, etc., not to teach them the art of deceiving and killing others, but to teach them justice, unselfishness, compassion, love—and that not by words, but by the example of our own good life.....Only such people realizing the Kingdom of God in themselves, in their souls, will establish, without directly aiming at this purpose, that external Kingdom of God which every human soul is longing for.....The evil from which the men of the Christian world suffer is that they have temporarily lost religion.....Is it not evident that, if there be a salvation from this position, it is only one: that one which Jesus teaches?—“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (that which is within you), and all the rest—*i.e.*



# THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

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## PREFACE

**I**N the year 1884 I wrote a book under the title "What I Believe," in which I did in fact make a sincere statement of my beliefs.

In affirming my belief in Christ's teaching, I could not help explaining why I do not believe, and consider as mistaken, the Church's doctrine, which is usually called Christianity.

Among the many points in which this doctrine falls short of the doctrine of Christ I pointed out as the principal one the absence of any commandment of non-resistance to evil by force. The perversion of Christ's teaching by the teaching of the Church is more clearly apparent in this than in any other point of difference.

I know—as we all do—very little of the practice and the spoken and written doctrine of former times on the subject of non-resistance to evil. I knew what had been said on the subject by the fathers of the Church—Origen, Tertullian, and others—I knew too of the existence of some so-called sects of Mennonites, Herrnhuters, and Quakers, who do not allow a Christian the use of weapons, and do not enter military service; but I knew little of what had been done by these so-called sects toward expounding the question.

My book was, as I had anticipated, suppressed by the Russian censorship; but partly owing to my literary reputation, partly because the book had excited people's curiosity, it circulated in manuscript and in lithographed copies in Russia and through translations abroad, and it evoked, on one side, from those who shared my convictions, a series of essays with a great deal of information on the subject, on the other side a series of criticisms on the principles laid down in my book.

A great deal was made clear to me by both hostile and sympathetic criticism, and also by the historical events of late years; and I was led to fresh results and conclusions, which I wish now to expound.

First I will speak of the information I received on the history of the question of non-resistance to evil; then of the views of this question maintained by spiritual critics, that is, by professed believers in the Christian religion, and also by temporal ones, that is, those who do not profess the Christian religion; and lastly I will speak of the conclusions to which I have been brought by all this in the light of the historical events of late years.

L. TOLSTOY.

YASNAÏA POLIANA,  
May 14/26, 1893.