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"Thou Shalt Kill No One" (Concluded)

Author(s): LEO TOLSTOY

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has been extended to the German Emperor on his visit to this country."

## "Thou Shalt Kill No One."

BY COUNT LEO TOLSTOY.

*Concluded from last month.*

[This latest of Count Tolstoy's utterances against war and violence, translated by Aylmer Maude and first published in the *London Tribune*, has been forbidden circulation in Russia. It repeats in a vigorous way, with reference to the present situation in Russia, Tolstoy's well-known teachings on the subject. Publication of it does not, of course, involve our approval of all that he says, particularly some of his reflections on the Church.—ED.]

### VIII. RUSSIA AND THE WEST.

In many respects the position of the Russian people now resembles that of the European nations a hundred years ago; but in many things it is quite different. The similarity is that the Russian nation now, like the European nations then, so far as the immense majority are concerned, has understood that the faith taught it in the trinity, in heaven and hell, in the sacraments, icons, relics, fasts and prayers, belief in the sanctity and majesty of the Czar, and in the duty of obedience to rulers,—a faith compatible with murder and every kind of violence,—is not real faith, but only an imitation; and latterly the people have freed themselves with extraordinary rapidity and ease both from this false religious faith and from the even less valid belief in the beneficence and necessity of imperial and governmental power.

In this effort to free themselves from belief in perverted Christianity and in the necessity and sanctity of power, the position of the Russian people quite resembles that of the European peoples at the commencement of the last century. The difference is that, the revolution now taking place in Russia having come later, the Russian people can see what the European nations could not then see,—namely, to what results the struggle with the rulers has led the nations. The Russian people cannot help seeing that this struggle has not only not destroyed, but has not even lessened, the evil against which the peoples strove. The Russian people cannot help seeing that all the efforts spent during the revolution and all the bloodshed have not abolished poverty and the dependence of the workers on the rich and powerful; have not prevented the expenditure of the people's strength on the seizure of distant lands and on wars; and have not freed the many from the power of the few. The Russian people cannot help seeing how vain is the struggle of violence against violence, in which the European peoples have uselessly expended so much strength. That is one cause of the difference between the present position of Russia and the position of the Western world a hundred years ago.

Another, and the most important, difference is that, besides the official, pseudo-Christian religion, with which both the Western and the Russian nations were inoculated, in the Russian people from the earliest times, side by side with the official, there always existed an unofficial, live Christian faith, which in some strange way, through the holy lives of the hermits, and through fanatic pilgrims, reached the people in proverbs, stories and legends, and took root among them and guided

their lives. The essence of that faith was that man must live *according to the will of God, for his soul*; that all men are brothers; that what is great before men is an abomination before God; that man cannot save himself by rites and prayers, but only by deeds of mercy and love. This faith always lived among the people and was their true faith, guiding their life, side by side with the false ecclesiastical faith with which they were formally inoculated.

This true faith was still strong among the people seventy years ago, but during the last fifty years, in consequence particularly of the decay of morality among the priests, and especially among the monks, it has become weaker and weaker throughout the nation, and has broken away into sects called Molokáns, Stúndists, Hlists, Sabbatarians, God's Folk, Malevántsi, Jehovahists, Doukhobórs and many others. The common characteristic of most of these sects (besides a decided repudiation of Greek Orthodoxy common to them all) has been an ever greater and greater adoption of the moral rules of Christianity into their conduct and a repudiation of the demands of governmental power, and, above all, a repudiation of the righteousness or necessity of the slaughter of man by man. That faith lately, as though by reaction from the revolutionary wrath that has infected a part of the Russian people, has clarified and purified itself more and more, and a larger and larger number of people of most diverse social positions and education profess this faith, and are becoming more and more closely united together, while their comprehension of Christian truth more and more simplifies itself and enters into their lives.

So that, in spite of the characteristics which the Russian revolution shares with all former revolutions, the Russian people (both because their revolution comes later and because they always were a particularly religious people, and, side by side with their external, official religion, developed and maintained Christian principles in their true significance) cannot but reach a different exit from their revolution than that which the Western nations reached in the last century.

In the Russian people an intense struggle is now proceeding between the two most opposite characteristics of man: man the beast and man the Christian. The Russian people have before them two paths: one, that along which the European nations have traveled and are traveling—to oppose violence by violence, to overcome it, and violently to set up and strive to maintain a new order of things similar to the coercive order that has been upset. The other consists in understanding that a union based on violence can be but temporary, and that only by sharing one and the same view of life, and one and the same law resulting therefrom, can men be truly united; it consists in trying to elucidate to themselves the view of life more or less clearly accepted by other people, with the law that results therefrom (a law which, at any rate, denies the right of man to kill his fellow), elucidating to themselves this understanding of life, and on it, and on it alone, and not on violence, basing their life and unity.

And such a replacement of the union based on violence, by a union based on an understanding of life common to all men of our Christian world, awaits, I think, in our time not only the Russian people, but the whole of Christendom.

## IX. BACK TO THE TRUTH.

Much water will flow, and perhaps also much blood, before this is accomplished. But it is impossible that it should not be accomplished. It cannot be but that a time will come at last when the people of our Christian world, having freed themselves from false faith and from the violence resulting from it, will all unite in such a religious conception of life (the highest accessible to them all) as will render the killing of man by man not merely impossible, but quite unnecessary. That time will come; for the life of men united by violence proceeding from a worn-out faith can be but a temporary, transitional condition, and cannot regulate the life of reasonable beings. Animals may be united by violence, but men are united only by a common understanding of life; and there is only one comprehension of life common to all men in our day. And I think that that understanding is expressed in that Christianity which, however we may understand it, rejects the utility, necessity or righteousness of murder.

Indeed, if people who think they believe in Christianity would but put aside from it all the nonsense about trinities, processions of the Holy Ghost, salvation by faith, heaven and hell, etc., and even all the sentimental words about love in the highly popular thirteenth chapter of Corinthians; and if those who do not believe in Christianity, but believe in science, would reject from it all the verbose and complex dissertations about Law, the State, Representation, Progress, and Future Socialism, and in place of all that would admit the one simple, clear truth, expressed thousands of years ago, forming the first, indispensable, negative condition of all morality: a truth recognized by the heart, mind, and whole being of every unperverted man — the truth that man should not slay his fellow-man — then immediately the whole horrible, brutal order of our lives would be changed, and a life accordant with the consciousness of the men of our day would naturally result, accomplishing the aims of the best men of our time.

With stoppages, retreats and turnings backward, humanity slowly rises higher and higher, passing from step to step in its movement towards perfection and blessedness. Humanity has long stood before the step that will lift it to the possibility of an harmonious life without the need of murder; but in our time it must mount that step, whether it wishes to or not. If not reason or the impulse towards goodness, then the ever-increasing misery of their position will compel men to begin to arrange their life not on a basis of hatred and threats, but on a basis of reason and love.

“The kingdom of heaven on earth — that is the aim and wish of humanity (Thy kingdom come). Christ brought that kingdom near to us, but men did not understand him, and set up in us the kingdom of priests, and not the kingdom of God,” says Kant. “And only then,” says he, “shall we have a full right to say that the kingdom of God has reached us, when the conception of the necessity of a gradual transition from church faith to a universal, reasonable religion has taken root among us.

And I think — and not only think, but am assured — that that time has come.

People have arranged for themselves a life depending entirely on deeds repellent alike to man's reason and

man's heart, and at the same time, by a whole, long, cunning fraud evolved during centuries, they have quite convinced themselves either that they confess the law of Christ or that they know a science which indubitably proves that the murder of man by man is accordant with our heart and reason; and when they are told that their life is bestial, and that their Christianity and science are a satire and a parody on religion and on science,— that they must cease to be murderers if they wish to be either Christians or enlightened men,— they only smile and shrug their shoulders. So impossible does it appear to them to cease to do what was forbidden by the most primitive religious laws of the most ancient nations, implanted both in the conscience and heart of every unperverted man, and what cannot by the most ingenious argumentations be made to accord with the Christian teaching they profess or with that enlightenment of which they are so proud!

How terrible must be the mental decadence of the men of our world when they can believe that their life will become worse if they cease to execute, torture, kill and hang one another! And how great must be the moral and religious perversion of men when it is necessary to prove to them that “Thou shalt not kill” does not mean that they may kill the people of other nations, and those in general whose murder they consider advantageous for themselves, but that these words (which we attribute to God) mean that *no one should, or therefore may, kill any one!*

Yes, horrible is the moral and mental depravity of such people, when they yet consider themselves to have reached the highest stage of spiritual development. And, terrible to say, such, with few exceptions, are all the people of our civilized, perverted world. The only consolation is that this terrible decadence is a sign of that last stage of perversion which is sure to result in an awakening; and I believe the present Russian revolution will bring that to pass.

Yes, of course, the teaching of Christ is impracticable for those who live by supervising and managing the construction of ironclads and fortresses, the training of soldiers to kill, the schools that educate men-slayers, the law courts, prisons and scaffolds, as well as for people who possess riches defended by murder. For such people, evidently, Christ's teaching is impracticable. But for those who have to build the forts and ironclads, who are taught to kill, who are perverted in the schools, who are executed and shot, and for all who produce the riches defended by murder, life without murder and without violence is much more practicable than the life they now live; and I think the immense majority of the Russian people will understand this, and do already in part understand it.

## X. THE TRAMPLED GARDEN.

I believe in this, because the absurdity of what is taking place is too obvious. The Government men and the Revolutionists preach: these, the most refined, ingenious, scientific and political laws; those, yet more ingenious, complex, far-reaching plans of how in the future humanity must be organized. But they all, to accomplish their plans, consider it an unimportant matter that for the time being the necessity and righteousness of murder is allowed; and so, in spite of all their profundity, diligence, and enthusiasm, their refined and

ingenious conceptions do not improve life, but life, on the contrary, becomes worse and worse.

People have arranged a garden, and in the most approved manner have planted in it the most precious plants, which they manure, water and tend; and they have forgotten one thing. They have left a breach in the fence, and cattle enter the garden and tread down and tear up all that is in it; and the people are surprised and grieved, and cannot at all understand why all their labor leads to nothing.

That is what is happening in the life of the men of our so-called Christian world. They have invented all kinds of religious and political laws, which are supposed to protect them and have improved their physical condition in all sorts of ways; they interchange thought across the oceans, they fly through the air, they perform various miracles; but they have allowed one small deviation from what is taught by the wisdom of past ages as well as by their own reason and heart: they have acknowledged the right of man to slay his fellow; and all their religious and political defences cease to be defences, and all the miracles of technical improvements not only do not promote their welfare, but destroy it.

This happens because, before setting up such, or such other, organization of life, before perfecting the means to utilize the forces of nature, man should first of all set up the religious-moral teaching revealed to him thousands of years ago that in every human body there dwells one and the same divine spirit, and that therefore no man, and no body of men, can have any right to violate that union of the divine spirit with the human body by depriving a man of his life. And the acknowledgment and establishment of such a moral-religious teaching is not only possible, but life becomes impossible without the acknowledgment and establishment of such a moral-religious teaching, which is simply the true meaning of the teaching of Christ, known and near to us all. And I believe our absurd and horrible revolution will bring the majority of Russians to the admission, to the acknowledgment, and to the practice of this religious-moral principle of Christian doctrine.

#### XI. WHAT MUST WE DO?

Yes, all this will be so when the kingdom of God comes; but what must we do till it comes? Do what is necessary that the kingdom of God may come! What must a hungry man do while he lacks food? Work to procure food. Food does not come of itself, nor will the kingdom of God; that is to say, a good life for mankind. We must make it. And, to make it, we must cease to do the greatest of evils: that which most of all confirms people in their evil life — murder!

And to cease to do this, very little is necessary. The consciousness that the slaughter of his fellow runs counter to man's nature is already in Christendom sufficiently rooted in the great majority of men. It is only necessary to understand, admit and incorporate in life the idea that we are not called on to organize other people's lives by violence, which inevitably results in murder; and that no murder we commit, in which we participate, or by which we profit, can be truly profitable to others or to ourselves, but, on the contrary, can only increase the evil we wish to correct. If people would but understand that,—and, refraining from all interference with other people's lives, would cease to seek to im-

prove their position by external, coercive organizations necessitating murder, and would seek to improve it by each man drawing personally near to the ideal of perfection clearly placed before him by Christian teaching, and quite irreconcilable with murder,—that organization of life which people now vainly strive to bring about by external means that only make life worse and worse would come about of itself.

There is but one way of freeing men from the ever-increasing ills they bear; that is, by acknowledging and introducing into life in the new era now dawning on humanity the true Christian teaching: that teaching which, if its basic principle — non-resistance to evil by evil — be not acknowledged, becomes merely a hypocrisy, that binds no one to anything, and far from altering the bestial, animal life men now live, merely confirms it.

"Ah! this is the old story of non-resistance once again," I hear self-confident, contemptuous voices remark. But what can a man do who sees the crowd crushing and destroying one another, push and press against a solid door, hoping to open it outwards, while he well knows that the door only opens inwards?

August, 1907.

### New Books.

BETWEEN THE DARK AND THE DAYLIGHT. By W. D. Howells. A book of short stories. New York and London: Harper Bros. Price, \$1.50.

This is a collection of original studies in psychology, of a mystic, romantic type, with a background of everyday life that is taken partly from American and partly from European scenes. The stories are written in the author's characteristically easy and cheerful style. The fifth story, "Editha," bears upon the question, whether or not it is right to go to war. Its hero, George Gearson, is a young man who has been taught by his mother that war is wrong, but who at the breaking out of the Spanish-American war is persuaded by Editha, his sweetheart, to enlist. Editha's knowledge of war is purely sentimental, as she has never come in contact with its horrors and consequences; she is thrilled with the glory of military patriotism. The young man, desirous of keeping her favor, conceals his misgivings and marches off to the front, expecting to return in victory. Strangely enough, and to the astonishment of Editha, he is among the first to be killed in battle. After a period of deep affliction and of prostration, she visits young Gearson's invalid mother in her Western home. The girl is clad at the time in deep mourning. Mrs. Gearson, who hates war more than ever and knows that her son would not have enlisted of his own accord, receives the young lady coldly. The following is a part of the conversation which took place at their interview:

"I suppose you would have been glad to die," said the mother ironically to Editha. "Such a brave person as you! I don't believe *he* was glad to die. He was always a timid boy that way; he was afraid of a good many things; but if he was afraid, he did what he made up his mind to. I suppose he made up his mind to go, but I knew what it would cost him by what it cost me when I heard of it. I had been through *one* war before. When you sent him you didn't expect he would get killed."