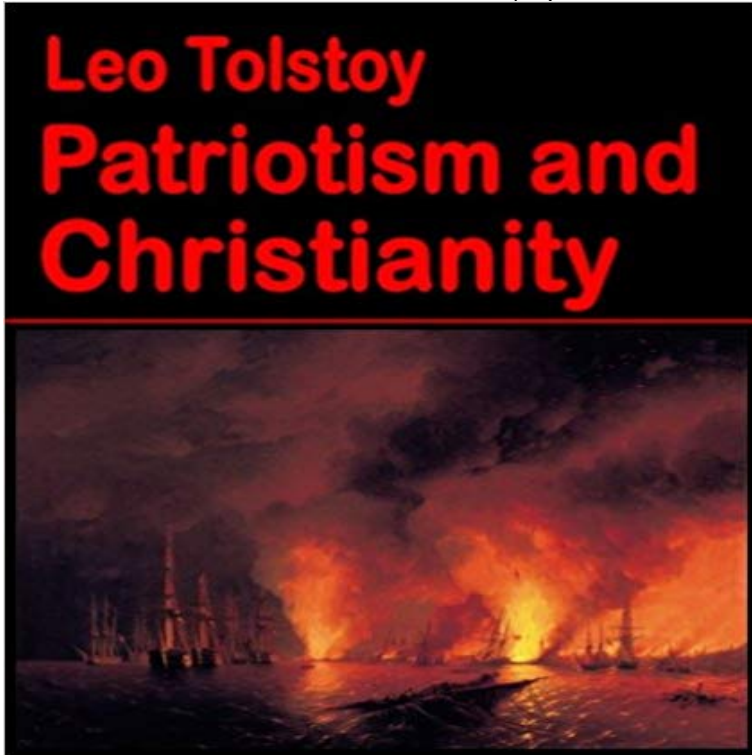


Patriotism and Christianity (illustrated) (Best Illustrated Books Book 33)



Patriotism and Christianity by Leo Tolstoy. Here are some passages from this book: The enthusiasm of the crowd is for the most part artificially prepared by those who require it, and the degree of enthusiasm exhibited by the crowd is only a clue to the refinements in the art of those who organize such exhibitions. The art has been practised for long, hence the specialists in it have acquired great adroitness in its preparation. But how can patriotism be a virtue in these days when it requires of men an ideal exactly opposite to that of our religion and morality, an admission, not of the equality and fraternity of all men, but of the dominance of one country or nation over all others? But not only is this sentiment no virtue in our times, but it is indubitably a vice ; for this sentiment of patriotism cannot now exist, because there is neither material nor moral foundation for its conception. Patriotism in its simplest, clearest, and most indubitable signification is nothing else but a means of obtaining for the rulers their ambitions and covetous desires, and for the ruled the abdication of human dignity, reason, and conscience, and a slavish enthrallment to those in power. And as such it is recommended wherever it is preached. Patriotism is slavery. But the subordination of people to governments will exist as long as patriotism exists, because all governmental authority is founded upon patriotism, that is, upon the readiness of people to subordinate themselves to authority in order to defend their nation, country, or state from dangers which are supposed to threaten. It is dreadful to say so, but there is not, nor has there been, any conjoint violence of one people against another which was not accomplished in the name of patriotism. No one is thinking of war ; only milliards are being spent upon preparations for it, and millions of men are under arms. And the old story will begin again, the awful customary acts. The editors of the daily press, happy

in the receipt of an increased income, will begin virulently to stir men up to hatred and manslaughter in the name of patriotism. Manufacturers, merchants, contractors for military stores will hurry joyously about their business, in the hope of double receipts. All sorts of government functionaries will buzz about, foreseeing a possibility of purloining something more than usual. The military authorities will hurry hither and thither, drawing double pay and rations, and with the expectation of receiving for the slaughter of other men various silly little ornaments which they so highly prize, as ribbons, crosses, orders, and stars. Idle ladies and gentlemen will make a great fuss, entering their names in advance for the Red Cross Society, and ready to bind up the wounds of those whom their husbands and brothers will mutilate, and they will imagine that in so doing they are performing a most Christian work. One free man will say with truth what he thinks and feels amongst thousands of men who by their acts and words attest exactly the opposite. It would seem that he who sincerely expressed his thought must remain alone, whereas it generally happens that every one else, or the majority at least, have been thinking and feeling the same things but without expressing them. It is quite possible that governments regard this sentiment as both useful and desirable, and of service to the unity of the State ; but one must see that this sentiment is by no means elevated, but, on the contrary, very stupid and immoral. Stupid, because if every country were to consider itself superior to others, it is evident that all but one would be in error; and immoral because it leads all who possess it to aim at benefiting their own country or nation at the expense of every other an inclination exactly at variance with the fundamental moral law, which all admit, Do not unto others as you would not wish them to do unto you.

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