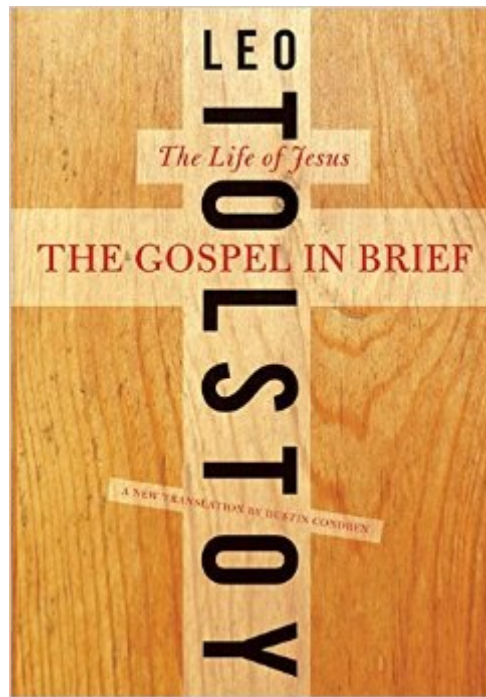


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# The Gospel In Brief: The Life Of Jesus



## Synopsis

“The Gospel in Brief” lives at the center of Leo Tolstoy’s thinking about the meaning of life. ... Beautifully translated by Dustin Condren. ... Although little known, this book remains hugely important. --Jay Parini, author of *The Last Station: A Novel of Tolstoy’s Last Year* The most celebrated novelist of all time, the author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, retells “the greatest story ever told,” integrating the four Gospels into a single twelve-chapter narrative of the life of Jesus. Based on his study of early Christian texts, Leo Tolstoy’s remarkable *The Gospel in Brief* “virtually unknown to English readers until this landmark new translation by Dustin Condren” makes accessible the powerful, mystical truth of Jesus’s spiritual teaching, stripped of artificial church doctrine. “If you are not acquainted with *The Gospel in Brief*,” wrote the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose life was profoundly influenced by it, “then you cannot imagine what an effect it can have upon a person.” “A fresh translation destined to introduce a new generation to a fuller understanding of Tolstoy’s mind.” --Kirkus Reviews “Dustin Condren captures, in this fresh idiomatic translation, the dazzlingly audacious achievement of *The Gospel in Brief*, Tolstoy’s daring synthesis the New Testament accounts of Jesus.” --Edward E. Ericson, Jr., editor of *The Solzhenitsyn Reader* “Newly translated by Dustin Condren, Tolstoy’s *Gospel in Brief* offers us a Jesus stripped of the overlay of Christian dogma and ancient metaphysics: his Jesus confronts readers with a real challenge and a call to change their lives.” --George Pattison, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, University of Oxford, and canon of Christ Church Cathedral

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Some nights ago, I picked up a copy of this book, which has been sitting on my bookshelf for a while. I started into this by a separate interest in the syntopical reading of *War and Peace*, and that led me through many elements of Napoleonic history. Along the way, I added this book because of my growing interest in Tolstoy and his place in Russian literature. Harkening back recently to my studies of the Russian language and political structure 40 years ago, this cumulative interest was pushed to the tipping point by the recent production of *Utopia*, the Tom Stoppard plays about the 19th century evolution of a Russian literary tradition after Tolstoy. The bases of my review and recommendation are simply these: 1) Born into a Christian tradition, I was familiar with the Gospels, but I have to plead ignorance of them more or less because I have always approached the Bible as a mystical and mysterious document, revealed only with the help of clergy and only while sitting in the pews of my Episcopal Churches. 2) After my deeply moving reading of the book, it was revealed to me for the first time the essential elements of Christ's teaching, unadorned by evangelistic zeal or liturgical ritual. It provided me a justification to discuss the Bible, the teachings of Christ, and the search for the spirit in polite secular conversations. I think *The Gospels in Brief* is a straight up and highly penetrating search for the truly integrated essence of the four canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I feel compelled to recommend the book, simply because it is the only book I have ever read from cover to cover when starting to read it myself at 2:30 AM as a sleeping pill.

This is specifically a review of the February 2011 version of the book translated by Dustin Condren. There was one reviewer that said the Isabel Hapgood didn't do a great job with the translation. In the Foreword of the 2011 edition, Condren notes that Hapgood's translation was based on a version of the book compiled and edited by one of Tolstoy's students, Vladimir Chertkov. He also pointed out that Chertkov had made many editorial changes and had omitted the conclusion in Tolstoy's original work. Condren, however, only referred to the original texts written by Tolstoy when writing this translation. Now, let's talk about the book. Nobody in their right mind can read this book and say that it is heresy. If anyone says that it is wrong, then he/she has some growing up to do. If you are a devout Christian, prepare for your beliefs to be challenged. If you are an Atheist, you might want to reconsider your vehement rejection of anything religious because the main message of the book is simple: love everyone. Tolstoy does not discuss the immaculate conception or how it happened, and he doesn't talk about the resurrection. All he talks about is the life of Jesus from the time of his birth,

to his crucifixion, and speaks of what he taught, rather than what contemporary religious figures would have you believe is the true meaning of Christianity. This is a quote from the book: "All external worship is not only false and harmful when it facilitates evil deeds, but it is harmful because the person that fulfills external ordinances considers himself correct and frees himself from the need to perform any acts of love.

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