



Two Shining Souls: Jane Addams, Leo Tolstoy, and the Quest for Global Peace

James Cracraft

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In his new book, *Two Shining Souls*, James Cracraft explores the decades-long encounter of Jane Addams, the famous American social reformer and peace activist, with Leo Tolstoy, the acclaimed Russian writer and sage. He documents Tolstoy's influence in Progressive-era America and particularly on Addams's career, citing previously unknown or neglected sources. In addition to her study of Tolstoy's writings—his now largely forgotten religious tracts more than his celebrated fiction—Addams traveled to Russia to see him personally, a meeting that is recounted in detail. Late in her life, Addams described Tolstoy as a rare “shining soul,” a term, Cracraft suggests, that applies equally well to her. His book adds an enduring religious dimension to Addams's rich legacy while newly delimiting, by contrast, the legacy of Tolstoy.

The story of Addams and Tolstoy brings into focus issues of continuing public concern, including the often conflicting demands on the individual—particularly women—of family and society; the legitimacy of violence in pursuit of political aims; the problem of poverty; the role of government in social reform; and the place of religion in both public and private life. The distinctive ways in which these emblematic figures dealt with such controversial issues offer insights that may be valuable even today.

Yet the single most important link between Addams and Tolstoy was their preoccupation with the question of peace, which they understood as a value subsuming all other values or goods. So *Two Shining Souls* is also about the invention and spread of “pacifism” in 19th-century Europe and America and the great crisis in its history precipitated by World War I.

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