

The Prince of Peace  
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adapted by Ted Kachel

Man is a religious being; the heart instinctively seeks for a God. Whether he worships on the banks of the Ganges, prays with his face upturned to the sun, kneels toward Mecca or, regarding all space as a temple, communes with the Heavenly Father according to the Christian creed, man is essentially devout.

There are honest doubters whose sincerity we recognize and respect, but occasionally I find young men who think it smart to be skeptical. . . . Even some older people profess to regard religion as a superstition, pardonable in the ignorant but unworthy of the educated. . . . Tolstoy administers to the 'cultured crowd' . . . a severe rebuke when he declares that the religious sentiment rests not upon a superstitious fear of the invisible forces of nature, but upon man's consciousness of his finiteness amid an infinite universe and of his sinfulness; and this consciousness, . . . man can never outgrow. . . .

Religion is the foundation of morality in the individual and in the group of individuals. Materialists have attempted to build up a system of morality upon the basis of enlightened self-interest. They would have man figure out by mathematics that it pays him to abstain from wrongdoing; they would even inject an element of selfishness into altruism. .

. . but one whose morality rests upon a nice calculation of benefits to be secured spends time figuring that he should spend in action.

There are difficulties to be encountered in religion. . . . I passed through a period of skepticism when I was in college and I have been glad ever since that I became a member of the church before I left home for college, for it helped me during those trying days. . . . It was at this period that I became confused by the different theories of creation. But I examined these theories and found that they all assumed something to begin with. You can test this for yourselves. The nebular hypothesis, for instance, assumes that matter and force existed. . . . Beginning with this assumption, force working on matter . . . created a universe. Well, I have a right to assume, and I prefer to assume, a Designer back of the design. . . . In Genesis it is written that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and I can stand on that proposition until I find some theory of creation that goes farther back than "the beginning." . . .

I do not carry the doctrine of evolution as far as some do; I am not yet convinced that man is a lineal descendant of the lower animals. I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept the theory; all I mean to say is that while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you

find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been produced. I object to the theory for several reasons. First, it is a dangerous theory. If a man links himself in generations with the monkey, it then becomes an important question whether he is going toward him or coming from him--and I have seen them going in both directions. I do not know of any argument that can be used to prove that man is an improved monkey that may not be used just as well to prove that the monkey is a degenerate man, and the latter theory is more plausible than the former. . . .

But there is another objection. The Darwinian theory represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of hate--the merciless law by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak. If this is the law of our development then, if there is any logic that can bind the human mind, we shall turn backward toward the beast in proportion as we substitute the law of love. I prefer to believe that love rather than hatred is the law of development. . . . But, I repeat, while I do not accept the Darwinian theory I shall not quarrel with you about it; I only refer to it to remind you that it does not solve the mystery of life or explain human progress. I fear that some have accepted it in the hope of escaping from the miracle, but why should the miracle frighten us? . . . .

The miracle raises two questions: "Can God perform a miracle?" and "Would He want to?" The first is easy to answer. A God who can make a world can do anything He wants to do with it. . . . But would God want to? . . . To say that God would not perform a miracle is to assume a more intimate knowledge of God's plans and purposes than I can claim to have. . . . I find it so difficult to decide each day what God wants done now that I am not presumptuous enough to attempt to declare what God might have wanted to do thousands of years ago. The fact that we are constantly learning of the existence of new forces suggests the possibility that God may operate through forces yet unknown to us, and the mysteries with which we deal every day warn me that faith is as necessary as sight.

. . . . No, living a life that is a mystery, and living in the midst of mystery and miracles, I shall not allow either to deprive me of the benefits of the Christian religion. If you ask me if I understand everything in the Bible, I answer, no, but if we will try to live up to what we do understand, we will be kept so busy doing good that we will not have time to worry about the passages which we do not understand. . . .

I was thinking a few years ago of the Christmas which was then approaching and of Him in whose honor the day is celebrated. I recalled the message, "Peace on earth, good will to men," and then my thoughts ran back to the prophecy

uttered centuries before His birth, in which He was described as the Prince of Peace. To reinforce my memory I reread the prophecy and I found immediately following a verse which I had forgotten--a verse which declares that of the increase of His peace and government there shall be no end. . . . .

All the world is in search of peace; every heart that ever beat has sought for peace, and many have been the methods employed to secure it. Some have thought to purchase it with riches and have labored to secure wealth, hoping to find peace when they were able to go where they please and buy what they liked. . . . They all tell the same story, viz., that they spent the first half of their lives trying to get money from others and the last half trying to keep others from getting their money, and they found peace in neither half. . . .

Some have sought peace in social distinction, . . . some have thought, vain thought, to find peace in political prominence; but . . . I am glad that our Heavenly Father did not make the peace of the human heart to depend upon our ability to buy it with money, secure it in society, or win it at the polls, for in either case but few could have obtained it, but when he made peace the reward of a conscience void of offense toward God and Man, He put it within the reach of all. The poor can secure it as easily as the rich, the social outcasts as freely as the leader of

society, and the humblest citizen equally with those who wield political power. . . .

Again, Christ deserves to be called the Prince of Peace because He has given us a measure of greatness which promotes peace. When his disciples quarreled among themselves as to which should be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, He rebuked them and said: "Let him who would be chiefest among you be the servant of all." Service is the measure of greatness it always has been true; it is true today, and it always will be true, that he is greatest who does the most good. . . . In former times when men read that Christ came "to bring life and immortality to light" they placed the emphasis upon immortality; now they are studying Christ's relation to human life. People used to read the Bible to find out what it said of Heaven; now they read it more to find what light it throws upon the pathway of today. . . . The world is learning that Christ came not to narrow life, but to enlarge it--not to rob it of its joy, but to fill it to overflowing with purpose, earnestness and happiness.

But this Prince of Peace promises not only peace but strength. Some have thought his teachings fit only for the weak and the timid and unsuited to men of vigor, energy and ambition. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Only the man of faith can be courageous. Confident that he fights on the side of Jehovah, he doubts not the success of his cause.

What matters it whether he shares in the shouts of triumph?  
If every word spoken in behalf of truth has its influence and every deed done for the right weighs in the final account, it is immaterial to the Christian whether his eyes behold victory or whether he dies in the midst of the conflict. . . .  
. Only those who believe attempt the seemingly impossible, and by attempting, prove that one, with God can chase a thousand and that two can put ten thousand to flight. . . .  
I am glad that he, who is called the Prince of Peace—who can bring peace to every troubled heart and whose teachings, exemplified in life, will bring peace between man and man, between community and community, between State and State, between nation and nation throughout the world.