

A CHRISTIAN PRECEDENT

Nineteen hundred years ago wise men came from the East, following the Star of Bethlehem and seeking Him who was to be born the Prince of Peace. If they could do this, inspired only by prophecy unfulfilled, this great Christian nation, after nineteen centuries of demonstration, should be able to go as a wise nation from the west, carrying gifts to relieve the distress on both sides, and appeal to these people to come with us and, in the name of the Prince of Peace, lift the world out of the bloody mire and up to a plane upon which a permanent peace can be built.

Some talk about going into this war, if honor requires. Oh, my countrymen, there is no honor that we can secure or defend by going into this war this is comparable with the honor that we can win if we can persuade the warring nations to turn, like prodigal sons, from the husks on which they have fed and make the future of the world bright by substituting co-operation for combat, and friendship for the hatreds out of which wars grow.

(From Lake Mohonk Speech.)

RELIGION

RELIGION DEFINED

RELIGION HAS BEEN DEFINED BY TOLSTOY AS THE RELATION WHICH MAN FIXES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS GOD, AND MORALITY AS THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF THIS INWARD RELATION. Every one, by the time he reaches maturity has fixed some relations between himself and God and no material change in this relation can take place without a revolution in the man, and this relation is the most potent influence that acts upon a human life.

(From The Prince of Peace.)

THE BASIS OF RELIGION

Even some older people profess to regard religion as a superstition, pardonable in the ignorant but unworthy of the educated. Those who hold this view look down with mild contempt upon such as give to religion a definite place in their thoughts and lives. They assume an intellectual superiority and often take little pains to conceal the assumption. Tolstoy administers to the "cultured crowd" (the words quoted are his) 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, the great philosopher adds, man can never outgrow. Tolstoy is right; man, recognizing how limited are his own powers and how vast is the universe, leans upon the arm that is stronger than his. Man feels the weight of his sins and looks for One who is sinless.

(From The Prince of Peace.)

MAN A RELIGIOUS BEING

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.

(From The Prince of Peace.)

GOD

The existence of God need not be proven; it is a self-evident truth. "In the beginning was God"—we can not go beyond that. We must commence somewhere; we must start with something, and the Christian starts with Jehovah. The mystery of creation is not made clear by assuming that matter and force are eternal; the Christian begins with a more reasonable assumption, namely, that God is eternal.

If it is difficult to understand how there can be an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God—the Creator of all things, it is still more difficult to understand how there can be a world, such as we see about us, without such a supreme and eternal being as its author and director. It is easier for the human mind to believe in such a God than to believe in any other theory of

creation—hence the almost universal belief in a Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." His power, His wisdom, and His love are all manifested in the provision He has made for the welfare of His children. And how dependent we are upon Him! "Give us this day our daily bread," is not a formal petition. If He ceased to gather the mists from the ocean and form them into clouds, all life would disappear from the earth, but we have His promise of the early and the latter rain, of seed time and harvest. If He drew a veil between us and the sun, night would bring with it a sleep that would know no waking, but light and heat are meted out to us each day according to our needs, and he gives as freely to the humblest as to the greatest. No wonder He is called Father, and Father of all, whether they acknowledge their indebtedness to Him or not.

(From The Fruits of The Tree.)

THE BIBLE

Next to the belief in God I would place the acceptance of the Bible as the word of God. I need not present arguments in its support; its claims have been established—the burden of proof is upon those who reject it. Those who regard it as a man-made book should be challenged to put their theory to the test. If man made the Bible, he is, unless he has degenerated, able to make as good a book today.

Judged by human standards, man is far better prepared to write a Bible now than he was when our Bible was written. The characters whose words and deeds are recorded in the Bible were members of a single race; they lived among the hills of Palestine in a territory scarcely larger than one of our counties. They did not have printing presses and they lacked the learning of the schools; they had no great libraries to consult, no steamboats to carry them around the world and make them acquainted with the various centers of ancient civilization; they had no telegraph wires to bring them the news from the ends of the earth and no newspapers to spread before them each morning the doings of the day before. Science had not unlocked Nature's door and revealed the secrets of rocks below and stars above. From what a scantily supplied storehouse of knowledge they had to draw, compared with the unlimited wealth of information at man's command today! And yet these Bible characters grappled with every problem that confronts mankind, from the creation of the world to eternal life beyond the tomb. They have given us a diagram of man's existence from the cradle to the grave and they have set up warnings at every dangerous point along the path.

We turn back to the Bible for the Ten Commandments which form the foundation of our statute law and for the Sermon on the Mount, which lays down the rules for our spiritual growth. The Bible gives us the story of the birth, the words, the works, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Him whose coming was foretold in prophecy, whose arrival was announced by the Angel voices, singing Peace and Good-will—the history of Him who gave to the world a code of morality superior to anything that the world had ever known before or has known since—the thrilling story of One who is the growing figure of all time, whom the world is accepting as Saviour and as the Perfect Example.

Let the atheists and the materialists produce a better Bible than ours, if they can. Let them collect the best of their school to be found among the graduates of universities—as many as they please and from every land. Let the members of this selected group travel where they will, consult such libraries as they please, and employ every modern means of swift communication. Let them glean in the fields of geology, botany, astronomy, biology and zoology, and then roam at will wherever science has opened the way; let them take advantage of all the progress in art and in literature, in oratory and in history—let them use to the full every instrumentality that is employed in modern civilization. And when they have exhausted every source, let them embody the results of their best intelligence in a book and offer it to the world as a substitute for this Bible of ours. Have they the confidence that the Prophets of Baal had in their God? Will they try? If not, what excuse will they give? Has man fallen from his high estate, so that we can not rightfully expect as

much of him now as nineteen centuries ago? Or does the Bible come to us from a source that is higher than man—which?

But our case is even stronger. The opponents of the Bible can not take refuge in the plea that man is retrograding. They loudly proclaim that man has grown and that he is growing still. They boast of a world-wide advance and their claim is founded upon fact. In all matters except in the science of life, man has made wonderful progress. The mastery of the mind over the forces of nature seems almost complete, so far do we surpass the ancients in harnessing the water, the wind and the lightning.

For ages, the rivers plunged down the mountain-sides and exhausted their energies without any appreciable contribution to man's service; now they are estimated as so many units of horse-power and we find that their fretting and foaming were merely a language which they employed to tell us of their strength and of their willingness to work for us. And, while falling water is becoming each day a larger factor in burden bearing, water, rising in the form of steam, is revolutionizing the transportation methods of the world.

The wind that first whispered its secret of strength to the flapping sail is now turning the wheel at the well.

Lightning, the red demon that, from the dawn of Creation, has been rushing down its zigzag path through the clouds, as if intent only upon spreading death, having been metamorphosed into an errand boy, brings us illumination from the sun and carries our messages around the globe.

Inventive genius has multiplied the power of the human arm and supplied the masses with comforts of which the rich did not dare to dream a few centuries ago. Science is ferretting out the hidden causes of disease and teaching us how to prolong life. In every line, except in the line of character-building, the world seems to have been made over, but the marvelous changes by which old things have become new only emphasize the fact that man, too, must be born again, while they show how impotent are material things to touch the soul of man and transform him into a spiritual being. Wherever the moral standard is being lifted up—wherever life is becoming larger in the vision that directs it and richer in its fruitage, the improvement is traceable to the Bible and to the influence of the God and Christ of whom the Bible tells.

The atheist and the materialist must confess that man ought to be able to produce a better book today than man, unaided, could have produced in any previous age. The fact that they have tried, time and time again, only to fail each time more hopelessly, explains why they will not—why they can not—accept the challenge thrown down by the Christian world to produce a book worthy to take the Bible's place.

They have prayed to their God to answer with fire—prayed to inanimate matter with an earnestness that is pathetic—and they have employed in the worship of blind force a faith greater than religion requires, but their almighty is asleep. How long will they allow the search for the strata of stone and fragments of fossil and decaying skeletons that are strewn around the house to absorb their thoughts to the exclusion of the architect who planned it all! How long will the agnostic, closing his eyes to the plainest truths, cry "night, night," when the sun in his meridian's splendor announces that noon is here?

To the young man who is building character I present the Bible as a book that is useful always and everywhere. It guides the footsteps of the young; it throws a light upon the pathway during the mature years, and it is the only book that one cares to have beside him when the darkness gathers and he knows that the end is near. Then he finds consolation in the promises of the Book of Books and his lips repeat, even when his words are inaudible, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me," or "I go to prepare a place for you," "that where I am, there ye may be also."

(From The Making of a Man.)

CHRIST

The divinity of Christ is a material part of the Christian creed; it can not be omitted. If Christ is to be a Saviour, or even an authorita-