

**"The Twelve Days of Christmas":
A Collection of Quotations on the Theme
"on earth peace, good will towards men." [Luke 2:14]**



[Pieter Bruegel the Elder, "The Numeration (Census) of the People of Bethlehem" (1566)

[See a [larger version](#) of this image 6.5 MB JPG 2439 px]

[Also the [illustrated essay](#) "Bruegel, Taxes, and the Numeration of the People of Bethlehem (1566)" in "Images of Liberty"]

The 12 Days of Christmas

Images of the Heavenly Host in the Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry [\[WikiCommons\]](#)



The Nativity
[\[Larger Image 1684 px\]](#)



The Army of the Heavenly Host
[\[Larger Image 1684\]](#)

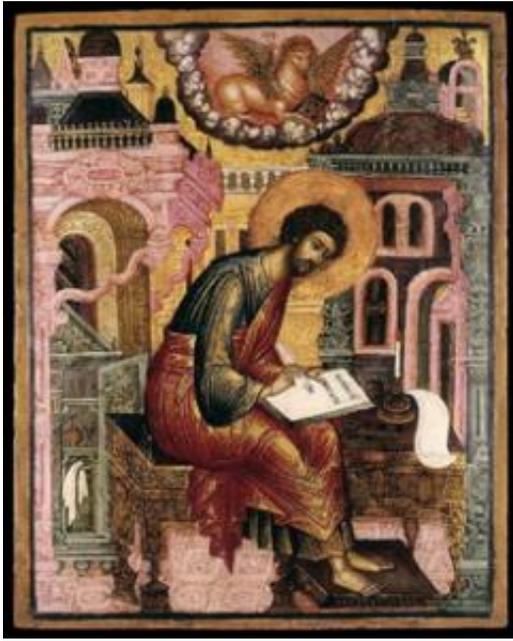
We have selected 12 quotations from the collection of texts in the Online Library of Liberty which deal with the theme of "peace on earth and goodwill towards men". A new quotation will be posted on each of the 12 days beginning with Christmas day. We start with the source of the original quotation from the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke chapter 2 verse 14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," and then follow it with a new quotation each day. The quote for Christmas day itself comes from a letter by Jan Huss which was to be read out on Christmas Day to his supporters in Prague in 1412. Thereafter the quotes are in chronological order.

The complete collection of Quotations about Liberty and Power can be found here, categorized by [theme](#). The link "See the quotation from our collection" will take you to the page where a longer version of the quote and other information about the author can be found.

The quotations for the 12 Days of Christmas:

- The [original statement](#) from Luke 2: 14
- [The First Day](#) (25 December): Jan Huss' Christmas letters and his call for peace on earth (1412)
- [The Second Day](#) (26 December): Petrarch on the mercenary wars in Italy and the need for peace on earth (1344)
- [The Third Day](#) (27 December): Erasmus stands against war and for peace on earth (16th century)
- [The Fourth Day](#) (28 December): Dante Alighieri on human perfectibility and peace on earth (1559)
- [The Fifth Day](#) (29 December): Samuel Cooper on the Articles of Confederation and peace on earth (1780)
- [The Sixth Day](#) (30 December): Vicesimus Knox on the Christian religion and peace on earth (1793)
- [The Seventh Day](#) (31 December): Madison on "the most noble of all ambitions" which a government can have, of promoting peace on earth (1816)
- [The Eighth Day](#) (1 January): Jefferson on the inevitability of revolution in England only after which there will be peace on earth (1817)
- [The Ninth Day](#) (2 January): Condé Raguét on the anti-Christian character of protection and the need for peace on earth (1832)
- [The Tenth Day](#) (3 January): Richard Cobden on public opinion and peace on earth (c. 1865)
- [The Eleventh Day](#) (4 January): Mises on the gold standard and peace on earth (1934)
- [The Twelfth Day](#) (5 January): Frank Chodorov on free trade as the harbinger of goodwill among men and peace on earth (1940)

The Original Statement from Luke 2:14.



The evangelist Luke "on earth peace, good will toward men" (1st century)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/409>.

In the account by Luke of the birth of Christ there is a line which states that the angel which announced the birth was accompanied by a "heavenly host" (a large army of good angels) who urged that there be "peace on earth":

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

About this quotation:

For "the twelve days of Christmas" of 2012 we have chosen 12 quotations from the OLL collection which deal with the exhortation of the heavenly host (a large army of good angels) described by the evangelist Luke that there be "on earth peace, good will toward men." Many Christians have taken this phrase to mean that there is a fundamental opposition to war which lies at the heart of Christianity. They have linked this statement with others which can be found in the Bible such as from Isaiah 2:3-4 which states "they (many people) shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This is certainly the view of people like Desiderius Erasmus, Vicesimus Knox, and Richard Cobden. On the other hand there are other Christians who see the military allusions as more literal, such as Matthew 10: 34-35 "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law." Far from beating swords into ploughshares the sword becomes the symbol of militant Christianity. We have taken the former interpretation as the theme for our series of quotations.

The First Day of Christmas (25 December)



Jan Huss' Christmas letters and his call for peace on earth (1412)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/414>.

The Czech religious reformer Jan Huss (1372-1415) wrote two letters from exile to the people of Prague in celebration of Christmas in 1412. He emphasizes that Christ is the peacemaker and that his message was "peace be to you" (pax vobiscum):

Dear friends, although I am now separated from you, because perchance I am unworthy to preach much to you, nevertheless the love which I bear towards you urges me to write at least some brief words to my loved ones.

Lo! dear friends, to-day, as it were, an angel is saying to the shepherds: I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all people. And suddenly a multitude of angels breaks into praise, saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill!

... Such, then, is the mercy that comes to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, Who grants you also peace. Our Master, the Peacemaker, taught His disciples to be peacemakers, so that, in whatsoever house they entered, they were to say: Peace be to you. When He rose from the dead and entered into the midst of them, He said: Peace be to you. When, too, He was minded to depart from them to His death, He said: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. After His manner, therefore, I desire peace for you also, dear friends—peace to you from Him, that you may live virtuous lives and overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh—peace to you from Him, that you may love one another, ay, and your enemies —peace to you, that that you may peaceably hear His word—peace to you, that you may speak with discretion—peace to you, that you may know how to be silent with advantage.

About this quotation:

We begin with two letters Huss wrote while in exile to his followers in Prague exactly 600 years ago. Jan Huss was excommunicated from the Catholic Church and forced to go into exile for his criticisms of the corruption which plagued it. Less than three years after these letters were written Huss was caught and burned at the stake for the crime of heresy. He refused to recant his views, was forced to wear a paper hat with the inscription "Haeresiarcha" (the leader of an heretical movement), was tied to a stake with a heavy metal chain around his throat, then burnt alive and his ashes scattered in the Rhine river. It is in the light of these appalling actions that one should read his letters urging his followers in Prague to heed the teachings of Luke that there will be "on earth peace to men of goodwill". Huss goes on to say in a most prophetic manner that "After His manner, therefore, I desire peace for you also, dear friends—peace to you from Him, that you may ... love one another, ay, and your enemies —peace to you, that that you may peaceably hear His word—peace to you, that you may speak with discretion—peace to you, that you may know how to be silent with advantage".

The Second Day of Christmas (26 December)



Petrarch on the mercenary wars in Italy and the need for peace on earth (1344)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/415>.

The Italian humanist poet Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) was appalled at the use of mercenaries by the warring city states of Italy which ravaged his country in the 14th century. He urged his fellow Italians "from strife and slaughter cease" and instead "gather joy and peace on earth":

Look! rulers proud! The hours are pressing on,
And life steals fast away.
Behold pale Death above your shoulders stand!
Tho' now ye live, yet think of that last day
When the soul, naked, trembling, and alone
Shall come unto a dark and doubtful land;
O, ere ye press the strand,
Soften those furrowed brows of scorn and hate,
(Those blasts that rage against the spirit's peace)
From strife and slaughter cease,
From hatching grievous ills, and consecrate
Your lives to a better fate,
To deeds of generous worth,
To gracious acts that cheer and bless mankind;
Thus will you gather joy and peace on earth
And heaven's pathway opened wide will find.

Song, I admonish thee
Thou speak thy speech with gentle courtesy,
For thou among proud folk thy path must find.
Steeped is the human mind
In evil ways by old authority, / Truth's constant enemy.
With the great-hearted few
Thy fortune try. 'Who bids my terrors cease?'
I ask, 'and which of you / Upholds my cry "Return! O heaven-born peace"?'

About this quotation:

In a long patriotic poem Petrarch bemoans the fate of Italy which had degenerated into endless civil wars fought often with mercenary troops. He calls upon "Italia mia" (my Italy) to end "this mad disgrace" where Italian fights against Italian thus indirectly serving the interests of the "Teutons" to the north who would like to see Italy politically weak and divided. He argues that the Italians have forgotten their noble Latin heritage and that their minds have been "steeped ... in evil ways by old authority, truth's constant enemy." He urges them to cease "strife and slaughter" and to "consecrate your lives to a better fate, to deeds of generous worth, to gracious acts that cheer and bless mankind; thus will you gather joy and peace on earth." It should be noted that this translation was published in 1915 when Europe was being torn apart by another continent-wide civil war which became known as the "Great War."

The Third Day of Christmas (27 December)



Erasmus stands against war and for peace on earth (16th century)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/413>.

In his polemic against war *Dulce bellum inexpertis* (1515) the Dutch humanist scholar and theologian Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) denounces war for its destructiveness and its violation of fundamental Christian doctrine. He reminds Christians that at the birth of Christ "the angels sung not the glories of war, nor a song of triumph, but a hymn of peace":

If there is in the affairs of mortal men any one thing which it is proper uniformly to explode; which it is incumbent on every man, by every lawful means, to avoid, to deprecate, to oppose, that one thing is doubtless war. There is nothing more unnaturally wicked, more productive of misery, more extensively destructive, more obstinate in mischief, more unworthy of man as formed by nature, much more of man professing Christianity....

Solomon was a type of Christ. But the word Solomon in Hebrew signifies the Pacific. Solomon, on this account, because he was pacific, was chosen to build the temple. David, though endeared by some virtues, was rejected as a builder of the temple, because he had stained his hands in blood, because he was a sanguinary prince, because, in a word, he was a warrior. He was rejected for this, though the wars he carried on were against the wicked, and at the command of God; and though he, who afterwards abrogated, in great measure, the laws of Moses, had not yet taught mankind that they ought to love their enemies.

At the nativity of Jesus Christ, the angels sung not the glories of war, nor a song of triumph, but a hymn of peace. "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good-will towards men." The mystic poet and prophet foretold before his birth, *Factus est in pace locus ejus.*" (And his place is in peace)

About this quotation:

In three major works Erasmus presents a devastating critique of war, especially when waged by Christians. There is the standard denunciation of the impact war has on ordinary working people, "the poor, the unoffending common people", whose lives and property are destroyed by the armies led by aristocrats, mercenaries and even bishops of the church. To Erasmus, all war was a form of fratricide with fellow humans killing each other, but it was doubly fratricidal when fellow Christians killed each other, or what he called "this fit of insanity". When Christian killed Christian he believed this violated Christ's "own peculiar law", the law of love or charity. Even when a military leader like King David fought wars "against the wicked, and at the command of God" he ended up with blood on his hands and was thus "a sanguinary prince" and therefore not invited to build God's temple. He reminds his readers that at the birth of Christ "the angels sung not the glories of war, nor a song of triumph, but a hymn of peace." In the Europe of his own day the people were "satiated with everlasting wars" and it was now time to "indulge at length a longing after peace."

The Fourth Day of Christmas (28 December)



Dante Alighieri on human perfectibility and peace on earth (1559)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/410>.

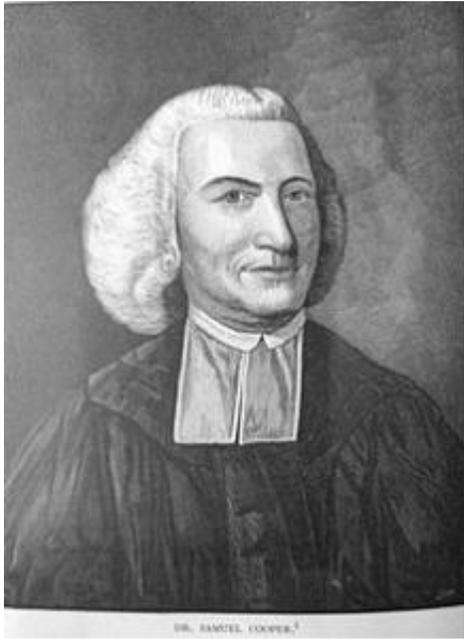
The Florentine poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) believed in a universal monarch who would end the squabbling and bloodshed between rival kings and lords in Europe. Only under such a regime could peace be established under which humanity could thrive and prosper:

It has now been satisfactorily explained that the proper function of the human race, taken in the aggregate, is to actualize continually the entire capacity of the possible intellect, primarily in speculation, then, through its extension and for its sake, secondarily in action. And since it is true that whatever modifies a part modifies the whole, and that the individual man seated in quiet grows perfect in knowledge and wisdom, it is plain that amid the calm and tranquillity of peace the human race accomplishes most freely and easily its given work. How nearly divine this function is revealed in the words, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." Whence it is manifest that universal peace is the best of those things which are ordained for our beatitude. And hence to the shepherds sounded from on high the message not of riches, nor pleasures, nor honors, nor length of life, nor health, nor beauty; but the message of peace. For the heavenly host said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." Likewise, "Peace be unto you" was the salutation of the Saviour of men. It befitted the supreme Saviour to utter the supreme salutation. It is evident to all that the disciples desired to preserve this custom; and Paul likewise in his words of greeting.

About this quotation:

It is curious to find an argument in a 16th century text in defence of monarchy these passages extolling peace as the best way human beings can achieve perfectibility in both thought and action. One would normally associate the idea of perfectibility with the 18th century enlightenment, most notably Condorcet, or the early 19th century with Wilhelm von Humboldt. Yet here Dante states that the quiet, calm, and tranquility provided by a state of peace allows the human race to "accomplish most freely and easily its given work" which is in the first instance intellectual or speculative in nature (thus literature or philosophy) and secondly by "extension" all other types of "action" in the physical world. One wonders if one might take this to mean all manner of economic activity including trade and exchange with others? Dante links these ideas to religion with the idea that this state of peace brings human beings closer to that of the angels where a situation of beatitude might be achieved as promised by the heavenly host at the birth of Christ. We include with this quotation the notes of the translator Aurelia Henry which provide a list of other passages from Dante's works where he discusses peace, suggesting that it was of great concern to him.

The Fifth Day of Christmas (29 December)



Samuel Cooper on the Articles of Confederation and peace on earth (1780)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/412>.

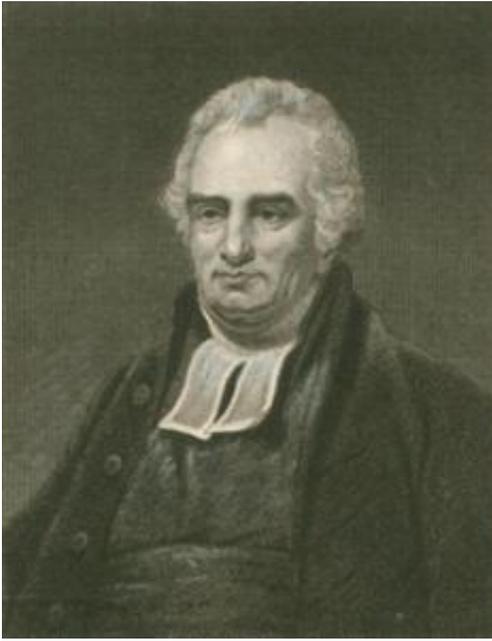
The Massachusetts clergyman Samuel Cooper (1725-1783) gave a patriotic sermon in 1780 to celebrate the adoption of the Articles of Confederation. He concludes by urging his listeners to help build "the new city" in America by making the wilderness fruitful, inviting the injured and oppressed to come to America, and to create a country which "breaths" the principles of "peace on earth, and good will towards men":

Our mountains, our rivers and lakes have a singular air of dignity and grandeur. May our conduct correspond to the face of our country! At present an immense part of it lies as nature hath left it, and human labour and art have done but little, and brightened only some small specks of a continent that can afford ample means of subsistence to many, many millions of the human race. It remains with us and our posterity, to "make the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the desert blossom as the rose"; to establish the honour and happiness of this new world, as far as it may be justly our own, and to invite the injured and oppressed, the worthy and the good to these shores, by the most liberal governments, by wise political institutions, by cultivating the confidence and friendship of other nations, and by a sacred attention to that gospel that breaths "peace on earth, and good will towards men." Thus will our country resemble the new city which St. John saw "coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband." Is there a benevolent spirit on earth, or on high, whom such a prospect would not delight?

About this quotation:

Cooper's very long patriotic sermon was regarded as a model of its kind when it appeared in 1780 and was translated into other languages and circulated widely. He extolls the sacrifices made by patriots during the revolutionary war and upholds a vision of what America might become. He invokes the vision of America as the new "holy city, the new Jerusalem" spoken about by John in the Book of Revelation where the city comes "down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:14). Cooper hopes that the Americans will be able to live up to the promise of their new country. This they can do if they follow a number of conditions which he sets out: that they believe in their ability to transform the new world into a fruitful and productive land, that they do so by the "human labour and art" of both the existing settlers as well as by millions of "the injured and oppressed, the worthy and the good" who will come to its shores, that they preserve their liberal government and institutions, that they establish friendly relations with other countries, and that they devote "sacred attention" to creating a country which "breaths" the principles of "peace on earth, and good will towards men". One should also note an important proviso mentioned by Cooper, namely that "to establish the honour and happiness of this new world" the Americans could only make use of the land and its resources "as far as it may be justly our own."

The Sixth Day of Christmas (30 December)



Vicesimus Knox on the Christian religion and peace on earth (1793)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/406>.

The English anti-war minister Vicesimus Knox (1752-1821) reminded his parishioners in 1793 that the motto of Christianity was the exhortation from the gospel of Saint Luke "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men":

This gracious proclamation from Heaven announces the great purpose of Jesus Christ, the promotion of piety to God and benevolence to man. It may indeed be called the motto of Christianity. It may form the inscription on its unstained banners, as it advances in its progress, endeavouring to diffuse the blessings of perpetual peace and universal love....

Peace on earth! Alas where is it? amid all our refinement in the modes of cultivated life, all our elegant pleasures, all our boasted humanity, war, that giant fiend, is stalking over empires in garments dropping with the blood of men, shed by men, personally unoffended and unoffending; of men, professing to love as brethren, yet cutting off each other from the land of the living, long before the little time allotted them by nature is elapsed; and increasing beyond measure, all the evils to which man is naturally and morally doomed, at the command of a narrow shortsighted human policy, and an ambition which, considering the calamities it causes, I must call accursed.

The shades of the picture are black as death, the colouring of blood. No; not all the arts of politicians can veil its shocking deformity, from any eyes but those of the vulgar; the vulgar, I mean, rich as well as poor, titled as well as untitled, swaying sceptres or wielding a spade. By all but the vulgar and the creatures of despotism, offensive war, with all its pompous exterior, must be deprecated as the disgrace and calamity of human nature....

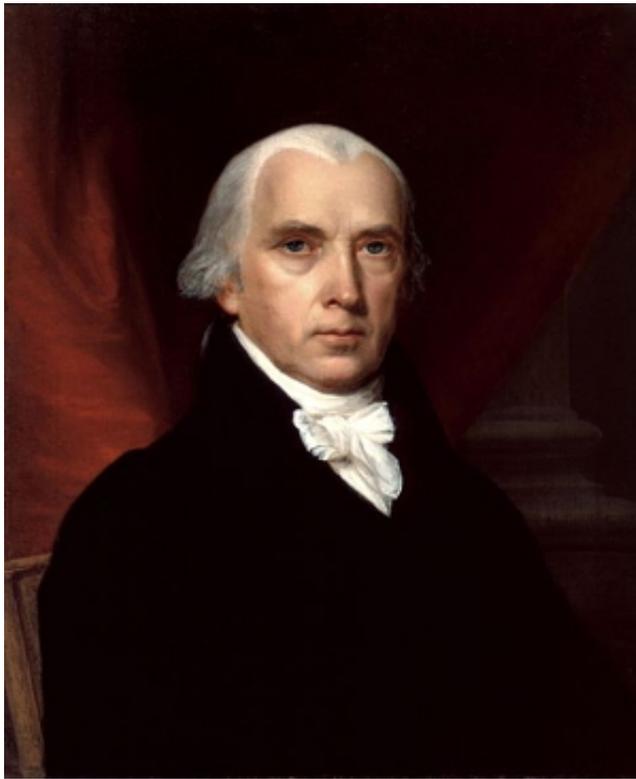
Oh war! thy blood-stained visage cannot be disguised by the politician's artifice. Thy brilliant vestments are to him who sympathizes with human woe in all climes and conditions, no better than sable mourning; thy melody, doleful discord, the voice of misery unutterable. Decked, like the harlot, in finery not thine own, thou art even the pest of human nature; and in countries where arbitrary power prevails, the last sad refuge of selfish cruel despotism, building its gorgeous palaces on the ruins of those who support its grandeur by their personal labour; and whom it ought to protect and to nourish under the olive shade of peace....

If the Christian religion in all its purity, and in its full force, were suffered to prevail universally, the sword of offensive war must be sheathed for ever, and the din of arms would at last be silenced in perpetual peace. Glorious idea!...

About this quotation:

The radical anti-war English minister Vicesimus Knox got into a lot of trouble with the authorities when he began preaching against the British and other European monarchies' efforts to defeat the new French Republic by force of arms during the 1790s. He reminded them that "the motto of Christianity" had been clearly stated in Luke II, 14, namely "peace on earth and goodwill towards men." What makes this sermon rise above the sometimes empty homilies about peace which are offered up at Christmas time are his profound moral and political objections to war. Here are some examples. He begins by noting the hypocrisy of the most enlightened and Christian countries of the world which ignore this basic Christian principle by constantly pursuing a policy of war, "that giant fiend, (which) is stalking over empires in garments dropping with the blood of men, shed by men, personally unoffended and unoffending". Young men are deceived by "the politician's artifice" and are taught by the military "the art of spreading devastation and most expeditiously and effectually destroying those of their fellow-creatures, whom politicians have bade them consider as enemies." These wars are paid for in the lives and taxes of those who make their living "wielding a spade" or in "the useful employments of mechanic arts". The young men who fall on the battle fields are "the pale victims of war; poor victims" who are "cut off in this world before their time, in youth and health, like rose-buds cropt in the bud of existence." Politicians are constantly defending their actions by claiming that the state is faced with the "political necessity of war" but which Knox calls "a narrow shortsighted human policy" which serves the interest of a small group of political and military leaders. Knox's solution is "to compose the differences of nations by negotiation" "in a league of philanthropy" and to return to the Christian ideal of considering "all men under the sun, as united to us by brotherly love, or, as it is termed, fraternity; natural, not political fraternity; the strong tie of one common nature". In this way Christian principles would come into "full force" and "the sword of offensive war (would) be sheathed for ever, and the din of arms would at last be silenced in perpetual peace."

The Seventh Day of Christmas (31 December)



Madison on "the most noble of all ambitions" which a government can have, of promoting peace on earth (1816)
See the quotation from our collection here
<<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/418>>.

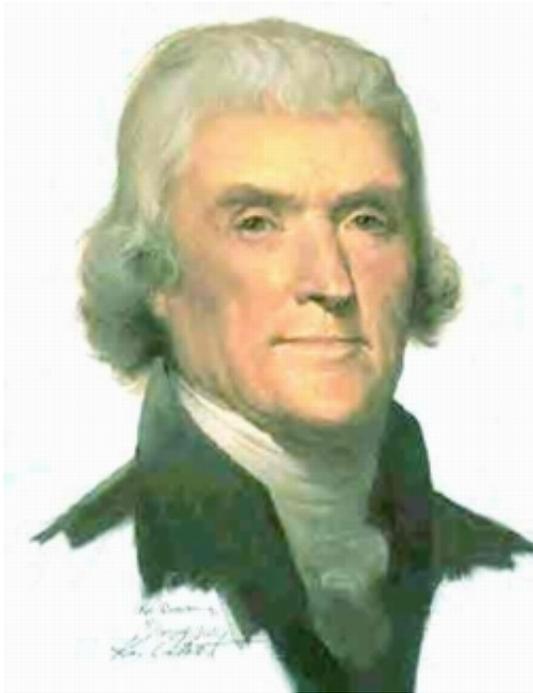
In an address to the Senate and House of Representatives as his second term as President was drawing to a close, James Madison (1751-1836) summed up the achievements of the U.S. in the 40 years of its existence. One of the things he was most proud of was that he had led "a Government which avoids intrusions on the internal repose of other nations":

And may I not be allowed to add to this gratifying spectacle that I shall read in the character of the American people, in their devotion to true liberty and to the Constitution which is its palladium, sure presages that the destined career of my country will exhibit a Government pursuing the public good as its sole object, and regulating its means by the great principles consecrated in its charter, and by those moral principles to which they are so well allied; ... a Government which avoids intrusions on the internal repose of other nations, and repels them from its own; which does justice to all nations with a readiness equal to the firmness with which it requires justice from them; and which, whilst it refines its domestic code from every ingredient not congenial with the precepts of an enlightened age and the sentiments of a virtuous people, seeks by appeals to reason and by its liberal examples to infuse into the law which governs the civilized world a spirit which may diminish the frequency or circumscribe the calamities of war, and meliorate the social and beneficent relations of peace; a Government, in a word, whose conduct within and without may bespeak the most noble of all ambitions — that of promoting peace on earth and good will to man.

About this quotation:

In this address to the Senate and the House of Representatives which President James Madison gave in December 1816 as his second term in office was coming to an end (1809-1817), he surveys the achievements of the young republic. About half of the things he lists are internal ones to do with the operation of the federal system, national elections, freedom of speech, trial by jury, and so on. The other half deals with war and foreign affairs and of these Madison was very proud, going so far as to say that thinking about them would "sweeten the remnant of my days." He mentions specifically the policy of not interfering in the affairs of other nations, treating other nations justly, and influencing other nations only by means of "appeals to reason and by its (the government's) liberal examples." These were the best ways Madison could imagine of "diminish(ing) the frequency or circumscrib(ing) the calamities of war." In fact, he believed that "the most noble of all ambitions" any government could have was to do what it could to "promot(e) peace on earth and good will to man."

The Eighth Day of Christmas (1 January)



Jefferson on the inevitability of revolution in England only after which there will be peace on earth (1817)

See the quotation from our collection here

<<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/417>>.

In the immediate aftermath of the end of the war against Napoleon Jefferson believed that the national debt and the serious economic recession in England would lead inevitably to the English people rising up and overthrowing their government as the Americans had done 40 years before. Only after this revolution had succeeded would the world finally be able to enjoy "on earth peace, and good will towards men":

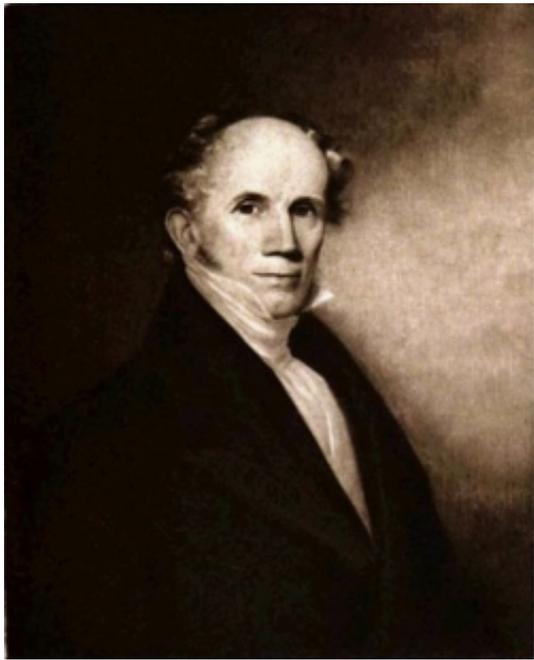
I turn, however, with some confidence to a different auxiliary, a revolution in England, now, I believe unavoidable. The crisis so long expected, inevitable as death, altho' uncertain like that in it's date, is at length arrived. Their government has acted over again the fable of the frog and the ox; and their bloated system has burst. They have spent the fee simple of the island in their inflated enterprises on the peace and happiness of the rest of mankind. Their debts have consequently accumulated by their follies & frauds, until the interest is equal to the aggregate rents of all the farms in their country. All these rents must go to pay interest, and nothing remains to carry on the government....

Our wish for the good of the people of England, as well as for our own peace, should be that they may be able to form for themselves such a constitution & government as may permit them to enjoy the fruits of their own labors in peace, instead of squandering them in fomenting and paying the wars of the world. But during these struggles, their artists are to become soldiers. Their manufactures to cease, their commerce sink and our intercourse with them be suspended. This interval of suspension may revive and fix our manufactures, wean us from British aeries, and give us a national & independent character of our own. I cannot say that all this will be, but that it may be; and it ought to be supplicated from heaven by the prayers of the whole world that at length there may be "on earth peace, and good will towards men." No country, more than your native one, ought to pray & be prepared for this. I wish them success, and to yourself health and prosperity.

About this quotation:

In the economic depression which followed the ending of hostilities against Napoleon in 1815 Jefferson was convinced that the bankrupt British government was ripe for revolution. It had undertaken all manner of "follies & frauds" which had lead to massive national debt and high taxation which were squandered in "fomenting and paying the wars of the world." Jefferson likened the warlike British state to the frog in Aesop's fable of the frog and the ox, in which the arrogant frog blew itself up in order to become as big as the ox. The British system of war, empire, and national debt was now so large that "their bloated system has burst" and the oppressed English people would soon seek a solution to their problems in abolishing their government of "kings, lords, & borough-commons." Only with a more moderate and cheaper republican government could the English people "enjoy the fruits of their own labors in peace" and live in peace with the rest of the world. Jefferson also amusingly speculates what might happen to the King of England and the Prince Regent after the English revolution. He fantasizes with some relish how the King might be exiled to Indostan (India) and the Prince Regent to Botany Bay in Australia, where "imbecility might be governed by imbecility, and vice by vice; all in suit." Jefferson concludes his letter with the hope that the whole world would pray for such a revolution in England so "that at length there may be 'on earth peace, and good will towards men'."

The Ninth Day of Christmas (2 January)



Condé Raguet on the anti-Christian character of protection and the need for peace on earth (1832)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/416>.

The American free trader Condé Raguet (1784-1842) argues that there is not one set of rules which governs "duty from man to man, and another sort of duty from nation to nation". There is only one, namely the "Christian dispensation" for "peace on earth, and good will to men" which in economics translates into a policy of free trade:

It is to us one of the most incomprehensible things that so many persons, who profess to be advocates of religion and good will to man, should be the disciples of a philosophy which teaches that the selfish principle is paramount to the principle of neighbourly love. If there be one truth which the Christian dispensation enforces with more than peculiar emphasis, after a man's duty to God, it is a man's duty to his neighbour. Upon these two principles hang all the law and the prophets...

Now what does the restrictive philosophy teach? Why, that individuals, pursuing particular branches of industry, should consult their own interests, without any regard whatever to the interests of their neighbours; that sections or districts of country should unite together in a scheme calculated to render others tributary to them; and, carrying the principle still further out, that nations should study their own selfish interests, without regard to the interests of other nations. The consequences of such a course of conduct cannot be other than to produce private enmities and heart-burnings between those who benefit and those who suffer, as is visible, every day, to our own eyes—civil war between different sections of the same country, as we may see before another year—and foreign wars of which we have witnessed an abundance within the last half century, growing out of commercial restrictions. If it were true that the Christian religion enjoined one sort of duty from man to man, and another sort of duty from nation to nation, there might be some ground for the adoption of one rule as applicable to one case, and another rule as applicable to the other. But no distinction is made between them, and peace on earth, and good will to men, are every where inculcated.

About this quotation:

The American free trader Condé Raguet firmly believed that the so-called "American System" of high levels of protection for favoured industries and government funded public works was "anti-Christian." This was true he argued because it violated two fundamental Christian doctrines, namely that of "peace on earth and good will to men" and "to do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." Furthermore he argued, there was not one set of moral principles laid down in the Bible which governed the behaviour of "man to man" and another set to govern "nation to nation." There was only a single set of moral principles which governed all human activity, that of "the rules of equity and justice" which were violated by protective tariffs and government subsidies. The American system of protection did this by making some, the consumers of high-priced protected goods, "tributaries" of others, those who benefited from tariff protection. Raguet thought that only a policy of free trade would permit "an observance of these rules (of equity and justice) (which) could not fail to make of society a complete band of brothers; and, so far from their operating to the disadvantage of individuals, their happiness would be incalculably promoted by it."

The Tenth Day of Christmas (3 January)



Richard Cobden on public opinion and peace on earth (c. 1865)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/408>.

The British advocate of free trade and peace Richard Cobden (1804-1865) chides an unnamed reverend for using his pulpit to praise the bellicose statements of the Duke of Wellington. He reminds the reverend that he serves a higher master who urged mankind to pursue the goals of "peace on earth, good will towards men":

Will you pardon me if, before I lay down my pen, I so far presume upon your forbearance as to express a doubt whether the eagerness with which the topic of the Duke of Wellington's career was so generally selected for pulpit manifestations was calculated to enhance the influence of ministers of the Gospel, or promote the interests of Christianity itself. Your case and that of public men are very dissimilar. The mere politician may plead the excuse if he yields to the excitement of the day that he lives and moves and has his being in the popular temper of the times. Flung as he is in the mid-current of passing events, he must swim with the stream or be left upon its banks, for few have the strength or courage to breast the rising wave of public feeling or passion. How different is your case! Set apart for the contemplation and promotion of eternal and unchanging feelings of benevolence, peace, and charity, public opinion would not only tolerate but applaud your abstinence from all displays where martial enthusiasm and hostile passions are called into activity. But a far higher sanction than public opinion is to be found for such a course. When the Master whom you especially serve, and whose example and precepts are the sole credentials of your faith, mingled in the affairs of this life, it was not to join in the exaltation of military genius, or share in the warlike triumphs of nation over nation, but to preach "Peace on EARTH and good will toward MEN." Can the humblest layman err, if, in addressing the loftiest dignitary of the Christian Church, he says "GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE?"

About this quotation:

In the mid-1860s Cobden was moved to write a lengthy letter to an unnamed minister who had been using his pulpit to praise the military exploits of the Duke of Wellington and to urge another war against the French. He chastises the minister for misusing his pulpit to promote war instead of taking Saint Luke's advice to seek "peace on earth and good will towards men". In the course of this long letter Cobden argues that the British people were traditionally a very bellicose people and that "we have been the most combative and aggressive community that has existed since the days of the Roman dominion." He argues that the wars against the French between 1793 and 1815 were undertaken not to promote liberty but "to deprive the French people of the right of self-government, and to place their liberties at the disposal of an arbitrary king, a corrupt church, and a depraved aristocracy". But this unthinking support for the government was beginning to change as a few small groups of committed individuals in the anti-slavery and free trade movements had shown. They had helped turn British public opinion against the slave trade (1808) and then slavery itself (1833), and most recently the policy of agricultural protection (1846). Cobden believed that the next cause for enlightened British public opinion to take up was that of opposition to war in which a new "peace party" would challenge the traditional British veneration of their "war heroes" and their victories in battles which were demonstrated in public monuments, the naming of streets and bridges after famous British victories, and even the erection of militaristic art in cathedrals and churches. Cobden believed the minister had erred in "join(ing) in the exaltation of military genius, or shar(ing) in the warlike triumphs of nation over nation, (instead of preaching) "Peace on EARTH and good will toward MEN."

The Eleventh Day of Christmas (4 January)



Mises on the gold standard and peace on earth (1934)

See the quotation from our collection here

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/411>.

In 1934 in the midst of the great depression the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) contrasted the economic policies of Fascist Europe and New Deal America with those of the liberal 19th century. The latter was one of the international division of labor, free trade, and the gold standard. The former advocated national autarky, severe trade restrictions, and government fiat currency. Mises believed that only the latter would permit prosperity and peace on earth to prevail:

It is not only the monetary and credit system that is out of gear, but the whole economic system. For years past, the economic policy of all countries has been in conflict with the principles on which the nineteenth century built up the welfare of the nations. International division of labor is now regarded as an evil, and there is a demand for a return to the autarky of remote antiquity. Every importation of foreign goods is heralded as a misfortune, to be averted at all costs. With prodigious ardour, mighty political parties proclaim the gospel that peace on earth is undesirable and that war alone means progress. They do not content themselves with describing war as a reasonable form of international intercourse, but recommend the employment of force of arms for the suppression of opponents even in the solution of questions of domestic politics. Whereas liberal economic policy took pains to avoid putting obstacles in the way of developments that allotted every branch of production to the locality in which it secured the greatest productivity to labor, nowadays the endeavor to establish enterprises in places where the conditions of production are unfavorable is regarded as a patriotic action that deserves government support. To demand of the monetary and credit system that it should do away with the consequences of such perverse economic policy, is to demand something that is a little unfair.

About this quotation:

Mises' great work on monetary theory was first published in 1912. In an introduction to the English translation which appeared in 1934 he provides a brilliant summary of his ideas as well as an analysis of the policies which resulted in the Great Depression. All countries, including Great Britain, the fascist states of Europe, and New Deal America under Roosevelt, refused for political reasons to allow relative prices to adjust to the new economic circumstances which existed after the economic destruction and distortion caused by the First World War. Without this readjustment of prices there could be no "purging process of the crisis" which was essential he believed before economic prosperity could return. Governments sought to manipulate their currencies and interest rates in order to prevent this necessary purging from taking place. In the concluding paragraphs of the introduction he contrasts the peace and prosperity of the 19th century, when policies of the international division of labor, free trade, and the gold standard were pursued, with the disastrous policies of the 1920s and 1930s which promoted national autarky, severe trade restrictions, and government fiat currency. The latter Mises thought would lead to war and economic catastrophe, while only strict adherence to free trade and a gold standard would allow prosperity and "peace on earth" to flourish once again.

The Twelfth Day of Christmas (5 January)



Frank Chodorov on free trade as the harbinger of goodwill among men and peace on earth (1940)
See the quotation from our collection here
<<http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/407>>.

The American radical individualist Frank Chodorov (1887-1966) notes that trade is "the harbinger of goodwill among men, and peace on earth":

It is the business of the government which prepares you for war to teach you to hate. It is the business of the government which prepares you for war to teach you not to trade with certain peoples because they have bad "ideologies." It is the business of the government which prepares you for war to prevent information coming to you which might predispose you kindly toward the people whom you will be called upon to kill. It is the business of war to break down that free exchange of goods, services, and ideas which is indigenous to all civilizations at all times....

Trade, internal or international, is the harbinger of goodwill among men, and peace on earth. The opposite of trade is isolation, and isolation is a mark of decadence, of a return to a caveman economy. If it is good for America to isolate itself from other countries, economically and culturally, it is good for New York to isolate itself from Connecticut, for Manhattan to isolate itself from the Bronx, for every man to isolate himself from his neighbor. Just as individuals specialize in occupations, so do nations, and usually the specializations are determined by superior natural resources or the development of special skills. It is no reflection on the United States that Australian wool has been a staple longer than that grown on American sheep. But it is a reflection on American intelligence that America makes it difficult for us to get this better wool, just as it is a reflection on the intelligence of Australians that they impose on themselves difficulties in the getting of our superior automobiles.

About this quotation:

On the eve of US entry in WW2 in December 1941 Frank Chodorov made an important distinction between "the business of the government" and "that free exchange of goods, services, and ideas which is indigenous to all civilizations at all times". A major trigger for the war against Japan was the embargo placed upon some of its key imports by Britain, the Netherlands, and the U.S., in other words, the breakdown of free trade and the use of trade restrictions as an instrument of war. According to Chodorov it is the business of government to prevent the natural inclination to trade with others by teaching its citizens to hate the citizens of other countries and to restrict the flow of information which might show that the enemy shares our common humanity. The "warriors" who fight these wars do not understand that free trade is "synonymous with civilization" because "their speciality is destruction" not production and they are essentially parasites who live off the productive activity of others who produce the goods and pay the taxes. Turning to the Gospel of Saint Luke II, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men" Chodorov concluded that free trade is "the harbinger of goodwill among men, and peace on earth".