

CHRISTIANITY

But why—we may indeed ask—all this heavy metal to bombard a brothel? Has no good thing come out of Nazareth?

It is in a way extremely trying to live in a world where connotation varies so wildly.

The Sicilian peasant who can roar with laughter at some blasphemous obscenity of his village priest while preserving his devotion to the deities satirized, will justly be astonished and disgusted with me. He will hardly credit that anyone can take deities so seriously as to do anyone an injury on their behalf. He is at heart a Pagan; Mary is his mistress and Jesus his “Bambino”, and he loves to play with them in the woods where the sunlight traces its faint fan-patterns among the leaves.

The idea of a Jesus who objected to people playing on a Sunday—who insisted on being worshipped in a silk hat and frock coat, who couldn't stand people obtaining refreshment after 12.30—well, it never struck him, that's all!

So when I go wandering among country-side Catholics I am nearly as happy in their simple worship as I am with the grander and austerer conceptions of Mohammed. But England! The people have materialized their God into a Parish Councilor, at the best; at the worst, he has been made the excuse for every crime.

The prevalence of syphilis in the Indian army has increased from 8% to 80% lest God should be shocked by our unholy recognition of the human nature of the human soldier.

It is useless to multiply examples. All I wish to do is to justify my agreement with Shelley and Nietzsche in defining Christianity as the religious expression of the slave-spirit in man.

I do not wish to argue that the doctrines of Jesus, they and they alone, have degraded the world to its present condition. I take it that Christianity is not only the cause but the symptom of slavery. There were slaves in Rome, of course, even under the republic. But it was only through Paul that the slime found tongue, and uttered its agony and blasphemy. Now, through the steady growth of altruism pari-passu with the Gospel that advocates it, the world is come to such a pass that the canaille is throned.

The Old Age Pensions folly, which is simply the official seal upon the survival of the unfittest, a check to honest ambition, a playing into the hands of the unskilful and the vicious, all of those (in short) whom a healthy organism crushes as the first condition of its well-being, is so "popular" that of all the House of Commons, the majority of whom see as plainly as I do how things stand, barely 1% are found to oppose it root and branch, and they from constituencies which the act will hardly touch, while the Lords—our bulwark, oh God! and what a fortress is that whose semi-lunes are Lord Townshend and Lord Tankerville!—pass the bill with scarce a protest. We are to be taxed beyond endurance, our defences neglected, our education left to sink or swim as it may, that our whole state may be clogged with its own excrement! It is no idle boast of the vermin socialists that their system is Christianity, and no other is genuine. And look at them! to a man—or rather to a Tetragrammaton which is a Temurah of T. H. I. S.—they are atheists and in favour of Free Love—whatever that may mean. I have talked with many Socialists, but never with one who understood his

subject. Empty babblers they are, muddle-headed philanthropists. They read a shilling abridgement of John Stuart Mill, and settle all economic problems over a "sirloin of turnips" in some filthy crank food dive. Ask them any simple question about detail, and the bubble is pricked.

Well, as I was saying, they are all in favour of "Free Love." Some paper mentioned the fact. What a stampede! Oh no! not me, please sir, it was the other boy. It would never do to shock the British public.

If I exclude Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells from these strictures, it is because Shaw is simply a masturbating monkey, and Wells a satirist playing at castles on his Sandgate sands.

So, then, it is Christianity considered as slavishness, as fear of all sorts, as altruism—that exquisite refinement of fear which we call sympathy—that I condemn. It is because we are afraid of death that the death of others affects us, except of course in the case of bereavement.

Just look at your Christian when he gets his modicum of manhood. He will not take the manly way, because (*a*) he is afraid of hurting the modesty of the poor girl (who is simply aching for him); (*b*) he is afraid of catching some disease: (*c*) he might get her into trouble; (*d*) what will the neighbours say?; (*e*) suppose she said no, what a fool I should look!; (*f*) God said I musn't. And so on through the alphabet of cowardice.

Look at your Christian as he sits down to dinner.

He won't eat melon because the weather is hot, and he might get cholera; mutton? think of the poor sheep! potatoes? bad for his fat; artichoke? bad for his gout. Tomatoes? cause of cancer. Wine? the great curse of our day, my dear sir. Milk? a mere mass of tubercle bacilli. Water? Typhoid! do you want to poison me, my dear

friend? Beer? Well, perhaps a little beer—for he has shares in a brewery.

You have already seen how this awful fear of nature and of God is twisted into an engine of oppression and torture against any one who declines to grovel and cringe before their filthy fetish.

It is obvious that cowardice is the cause of cruelty: the brave man strikes a strenuous blow, and all is over; the coward brought to bay snarls and strikes in desperation, and if by chance the blow goes home, he jumps on and mutilates and insults his victim.

Of course all this insane Christianity has produced its own toxin. Our prudery goes hand in hand with the most disgusting system of prostitution in the world, and our Theatres (too pure for that corrupter Sophocles) are disgraced by the most senseless and witless legshows. Our praise of poverty has produced the worst poor-laws in civilization; our democracy has perfected a snobbery which would make Thackeray stare with surprise. Queen Victoria the Good—what a washerwoman lost to mankind! was the French nation's epitaph upon her—drove the last nail into the coffin of art in England. Though 'twas needless cruelty: whom have we had of the first rank in England since Elizabeth but the Revolutionaries? Blake, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Swinburne, Swift, Butler, Milton, every one exiled, starved, bullied, driven insane; except Milton, whose supreme hypocrisy saved him, as it damned the nation for ever. Anyhow, bad as it was, Victoria made it worse, and, under a queen with a high-necked collar, it is left for me to unite in myself all the blare of all the trumpets. Call me Israfel, last of the angels, and let the dead rise from their tombs!

I therefore hold the legendary Jesus in no wise responsible for the trouble: it began with Luther, perhaps, and went on with Wesley: but no mat-

ter!—what I am trying to get at is the religion which makes England to-day a hell for any man who cares at all for freedom. That religion they call Christianity; the devil they honour they call God. I accept these definitions, as a poet must do, if he is to be at all intelligible to his age, and it is their God and their religion that I hate and will destroy.