

# THE SHAMES OF CHRISTENDOM

by

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SEEDS OF HATE

Christianity was cradled in Judaism, and this, it range as it may seem, is the origin of the undying enmity existing between them. Jesus Christ was a Jew; all the early Apostles and disciples were Jews; Christ was crucified by the religious men of His day, as probably He would have been by the religious men of any age since, except perhaps our own, because He seemed to them a dangerous revolutionary whose doctrines threatened the very foundations of faith and morality.

However unscrupulous were the means by which they secured His death, it was at least sincere religious scruple which sought it. He would, perhaps, have been tolerated to-day by the majority because we have lost that religious enthusiasm which produces martyrs and persecutors alike.

To-day it is almost as dangerous to accuse a man of a lack of broadmindedness as it would be to assert that he has no sense of humor. The result is that we are in danger of mistaking a policy of laissez-faire for that generosity of spirit which combines tenacity of personal conviction with willingness to admit that those who differ from us may be actuated by differences of mind and feeling, and are not of necessity animated by moral perversity or malignity of purpose. True broadmindedness is quite consistent with strong adhesion to that view of things which makes the greatest appeal to our confidence.

We would probably have tolerated Christ less from any real sense of the spiritual value of His teaching than from fear of the terrible tyranny of the stigma attached to narrowness. The men of His day ran no danger of broadmindedness, and the Christians, when they came into power, were in no more peril than the Jews who instigated the Gentiles to crucify the Greatest of their race.

At the same time, there can be little doubt that Christ would be condemned to-day by a considerable proportion of the rigidly orthodox, mainly for the same reason that the Pharisees condemned Him. He was too gentle and sympathetic towards the unorthodox, and even expressed views that revealed an alarming laxity towards conventional precept and practice.

Firmness of conviction does not depend for its strength upon condemnation of those who differ from us. God has not made us all alike; but unfortunately few of us can combine strength of conviction with sympathy.

The Pharisee, like the poor, is always with us. We too often find him lurking in our own hearts.

Until the dispersion of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, Judaism had the upper hand, and the infant Church passed through a time of fiery trial. We have only to read the Acts of the Apostles to realize this. It was not until the reign of Constantine that the Church's golden opportunity for retaliation, in open violation of all her Master had taught, arrived.

The writings of the most revered of the Christian Fathers are sullied by a most unchristian hatred of the Jews. Jerome, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria all show a terrible lack of Christian feeling, to say the least. Jewish homes were plundered, their synagogues desecrated and destroyed, themselves assaulted and exiled, with the approval, and even at the instigation of the fathers of the Church. All kinds of restrictions were laid upon themselves and exactions made upon their property. They were driven to all manner of shifts and evasions to maintain their homes and possessions. Astute by nature, they became crafty and cunning through persecution.

Acquisitiveness developed into avarice through continual subjection to plunder. "*Corruptio optimi pessima*" (the corruption of the best is the worst), and in the Jew the noblest qualities have too often become debased by the treatment he has received from his Christian brother.

Needless to say, the outraged Jews, when the opportunity came their way, exacted full toll from their enemies for insult and hatred. It cannot be denied that their savagery and ferocity left little room for the creation of records in Christian reprisals (Millman, Vol. III, pp. 82-3).

In the revolt under Benjamin of Tiberias in the early seventh century, when the Jews allied themselves with the Persians, we read of the massacre of some ninety thousand Christians in Jerusalem alone. At Tyre their efforts were not quite so successful. Here there lived some forty thousand Jews. The Christian Bishop seized these and flung them into prison. The gates of the city were closed, but a large part of the town lay outside the walls. The Jews and Persians seized these suburbs and began the work of destruction and slaughter. The churches were their chief object of attack, but the Bishop was quite equal to the emergency. For every church that went up in flames he cut off the heads of one hundred Jewish captives and threw them over the walls, until twenty thousand Jewish skulls rolled at the feet of their fellow-countrymen.

In these early days neither Jew nor Christian can claim with confidence the unenviable superiority in savagery and bloodthirstiness. One was quite as bad as the other. The Christian may perhaps lay claim to supremacy in evil, in that what the Jew did was but the following of what he believed to be a true interpretation of the Mosaic maxim An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, while the conduct of the Christian was in wicked violation of the teaching of the loving and forgiving Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian disgraced his Christ and earned for His name a heritage of hate which endures to this day.

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