



The Case Against Christianity [*The Antichrist*]

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Christianity is called the religion of *pity*.—Pity stands in opposition to all the tonic passions that augment the energy of the feeling of aliveness: it is a depressant. A man loses power when he pities. Through pity that drain upon strength which suffering works is multiplied a thousandfold. Suffering is made contagious by pity; under certain circumstances it may lead to a total sacrifice of life and living energy—a loss out of all proportion to the magnitude of the cause (—the case of the death of the Nazarene). This is the first view of it; there is, however, a still more important one. If one measures the effects of pity by the gravity of the reactions it sets up, its character as a menace to life appears in a much clearer light. Pity thwarts the whole law of evolution, which is the law of natural selection. It preserves whatever is ripe for destruction; it fights on the side of those disinherited and condemned by life; by maintaining life in so many of the botched of all kinds, it gives life itself a gloomy and dubious aspect. Mankind has ventured to call pity a virtue (—in every *superior* moral system it appears as a weakness—); going still further, it has been called *the* virtue, the source and foundation of all other virtues—but let us always bear in mind that this was from the standpoint of a philosophy that was nihilistic, and upon whose shield *the denial of life* was inscribed. Schopenhauer was right in this: that by means of pity life is denied, and made *worthy of denial*—pity is the technic of nihilism. Let me repeat: this depressing and contagious instinct stands against all those instincts which work for the preservation and enhancement of life: in the rôle of *protector* of the miserable, it is a prime agent in the promotion of *décadence*—pity persuades to extinction.... Of course, one doesn't say "extinction": one says "the other world," or "God," or "the *true* life," or Nirvana, salvation, blessedness.... This innocent rhetoric, from the realm of religious-ethical balderdash, appears *a good deal less innocent* when one reflects upon the tendency that it conceals beneath sublime words: the tendency to *destroy life*. Schopenhauer was hostile to life: that is why pity appeared to him as a virtue.... Aristotle, as every one knows, saw in pity a sickly and dangerous state of mind, the remedy for which was an occasional purgative: he regarded tragedy as that purgative. The instinct of life should prompt us to seek some means of puncturing any such pathological and dangerous accumulation of pity as that appearing in Schopenhauer's case (and also, alack, in that of our whole literary *décadence*, from St. Petersburg to Paris, from Tolstoi to Wagner), that it may burst and be discharged.... Nothing is more unhealthy, amid all our unhealthy modernism, than Christian pity. To be the doctors *here*, to be unmerciful *here*, to wield the knife *here*—all this is *our* business, all this is *oursort* of humanity, by this sign we are philosophers, we Hyperboreans!—

8.

It is necessary to say just *whom* we regard as our antagonists: theologians and all who have any theological blood in their veins—this is our whole philosophy.... One must have faced that menace at close hand, better still, one must have had experience of it directly and almost succumbed to it, to realize that it is not to be taken lightly (—the alleged free-thinking of our naturalists and physiologists seems to me to be a joke—they have no passion about such things; they have not suffered—). This poisoning goes a great deal further than most people think: I find the arrogant habit of the theologian among all who regard themselves as “idealists”—among all who, by virtue of a higher point of departure, claim a right to rise above reality, and to look upon it with suspicion.... The idealist, like the ecclesiastic, carries all sorts of lofty concepts in his hand (—and not only in his hand!); he launches them with benevolent contempt against “understanding,” “the senses,” “honor,” “good living,” “science”; he sees such things *asbeneath* him, as pernicious and seductive forces, on which “the soul”soars as a pure thing-in-itself—as if humility, chastity, poverty, in a word, *holiness*, had not already done much more damage to life than all imaginable horrors and vices.... The pure soul is a pure lie.... So long as the priest, that *professional* denier, calumniator and poisoner of life, is accepted as a *higher* variety of man, there can be no answer to the question, What *is* truth? Truth has already been stood on its head when the obvious attorney of mere emptiness is mistaken for its representative....

9.

Upon this theological instinct I make war: I find the tracks of it everywhere. Whoever has theological blood in his veins is shifty and dishonourable in all things. The pathetic thing that grows out of this condition is called *faith*: in other words, closing one’s eyes upon one’s self once for all, to avoid suffering the sight of incurable falsehood. People erect a concept of morality, of virtue, of holiness upon this false view of all things; they ground good conscience upon faulty vision; they argue that no *other* sort of vision has value any more, once they have made theirs sacrosanct with the names of “God,” “salvation” and “eternity.” I unearth this theological instinct in all directions: it is the most widespread and the most *subterranean* form of falsehood to be found on earth. Whatever a theologian regards as *true* must be false: there you have almost a criterion of truth. His profound instinct of self-preservation stands against truth ever coming into honour in any way, or even getting stated. Wherever the influence of theologians is felt there is a transvaluation of values, and the concepts “true” and “false” are forced to change places: whatever is most damaging to life is there called “true,” and whatever exalts it, intensifies it, approves it, justifies it and makes it triumphant is there called “false.”... When theologians, working through the “consciences” of princes (or of peoples—), stretch out their hands for *power*, there is never any doubt as to the fundamental issue: the will to make an end, the *nihilistic* will exerts that power....

Under Christianity neither morality nor religion has any point of contact with actuality. It offers purely imaginary *causes* (“God,” “soul,” “ego,” “spirit,” “free will”—or even “unfree”), and purely imaginary *effects* (“sin,” “salvation,” “grace,” “punishment,” “forgiveness of sins”). Intercourse between imaginary *beings* (“God,” “spirits,” “souls”); an imaginary *natural history* (anthropocentric; a total denial of the concept of natural causes); an imaginary *psychology* (misunderstandings of self, misinterpretations of agreeable or disagreeable general feelings—for example, of the states of *thenervus sympathicus* with the help of the sign-language of religio-ethical balderdash—, “repentance,” “pangs of conscience,” “temptation by the devil,” “the presence of God”); an imaginary *teleology*

(the “kingdom of God,” “the last judgment,” “eternal life”).—This purely *fictional world*, greatly to its disadvantage, is to be differentiated from the world of dreams; the latter at least reflects reality, whereas the former falsifies it, cheapens it and denies it. Once the concept of “nature” had been opposed to the concept of “God,” the word “natural” necessarily took on the meaning of “abominable”—the whole of that fictional world has its sources in hatred of the natural (—the real!—), and is no more than evidence of a profound uneasiness in the presence of reality.... *This explains everything*. Who alone has any reason for living his way out of reality? The man who suffers under it. But to suffer from reality one must be *abotched* reality.... The preponderance of pains over pleasures is the cause of this fictional morality and religion: but such a preponderance also supplies the formula for *décadence*....

16.

A criticism of the *Christian concept of God* leads inevitably to the same conclusion.—A nation that still believes in itself holds fast to its own god. In him it does honour to the conditions which enable it to survive, to its virtues—it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power, into a being to whom one may offer thanks. He who is rich will give of his riches; a proud people need a god to whom they can *make sacrifices*.... Religion, within these limits, is a form of gratitude. A man is grateful for his own existence: to that end he needs a god.—Such a god must be able to work both benefits and injuries; he must be able to play either friend or foe—he is wondered at for the good he does as well as for the evil he does. But the castration, against all nature, of such a god, making him a god of goodness alone, would be contrary to human inclination. Mankind has just as much need for an evil god as for a good god; it doesn't have to thank mere tolerance and humanitarianism for its own existence.... What would be the value of a god who knew nothing of anger, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, violence? who had perhaps never experienced the *rapturous ardours* of victory and of destruction? No one would understand such a god: why should any one want him?—True enough, when a nation is on the downward path, when it feels its belief in its own future, its hope of freedom slipping from it, when it begins to see submission as a first necessity and the virtues of submission as measures of self-preservation, then it *must* overhaul its god. He then becomes a hypocrite, timorous and demure; he counsels “peace of soul,” hate-no-more, leniency, “love” of friend and foe. He moralizes endlessly; he creeps into every private virtue; he becomes the god of every man; he becomes a private citizen, a cosmopolitan.... Formerly he represented a people, the strength of a people, everything aggressive and thirsty for power in the soul of a people; now he is simply *the good god*.... The truth is that there is no other alternative for gods: *either* they are the will to power—in which case they are national gods—*or* incapacity for power—in which case they have to be good....

18.

The Christian concept of a god—the god as the patron of the sick, the god as a spinner of cobwebs, the god as a spirit—is one of the most corrupt concepts that has ever been set up in the world: it probably touches low-water mark in the ebbing evolution of the god-type. God degenerated into the *contradiction of life*. Instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yea! In him war is declared on life, on nature, on the will to live! God becomes the formula for every slander upon the “here and now,” and for every lie about the “beyond”! In him nothingness is deified, and the will to nothingness is made holy!...

27.

Christianity sprang from a soil so corrupt that on it everything natural, every natural value, every reality was opposed by the deepest instincts of the ruling class—it grew up as a sort of war to the death upon reality, and as such it has never been surpassed. The “holy people,” who had adopted priestly values and priestly names for all things, and who, with a terrible logical consistency, had rejected everything of the earth as “unholy,” “worldly,” “sinful”—this people put its instinct into a final form that was logical to the point of self-annihilation: as Christianity it actually denied even the last form of reality, the “holy people,” the “chosen people,” Jewish reality itself. The phenomenon is of the first order of importance: the small insurrectionary movement which took the name of Jesus of Nazareth is simply the Jewish instinct redivivus—in other words, it is the priestly instinct come to such a pass that it can no longer endure the priest as a fact; it is the discovery of a state of existence even more fantastic than any before it, of a vision of life even more unreal than that necessary to an ecclesiastical organization. Christianity actually denies the church....

I am unable to determine what was the target of the insurrection said to have been led (whether rightly or *wrongly*) by Jesus, if it was not the Jewish church—“church” being here used in exactly the same sense that the word has today. It was an insurrection against the “good and just,” against the “prophets of Israel,” against the whole hierarchy of society—not against corruption, but against caste, privilege, order, formalism. It was *unbelief* in “superior men,” a Nay flung at everything that priests and theologians stood for. But the hierarchy that was called into question, if only for an instant, by this movement was the structure of piles which, above everything, was necessary to the safety of the Jewish people in the midst of the “waters”—it represented their *last* possibility of survival; it was the final *residuum* of their independent political existence; an attack upon it was an attack upon the most profound national instinct, the most powerful national will to live, that has ever appeared on earth. This saintly anarchist, who aroused the people of the abyss, the outcasts and “sinners,” the Chandala of Judaism, to rise in revolt against the established order of things—and in language which, if the Gospels are to be credited, would get him sent to Siberia today—this man was certainly a political criminal, at least in so far as it was possible to be one in *so absurdly unpolitical* a community. This is what brought him to the cross: the proof thereof is to be found in the inscription that was put upon the cross. He died for his *own* sins—there is not the slightest ground for believing, no matter how often it is asserted, that he died for the sins of others. —

28.

As to whether he himself was conscious of this contradiction—whether, in fact, this was the only contradiction he was cognizant of—that is quite another question. Here, for the first time, I touch upon the problem of the *psychology of the Saviour*.—I confess, to begin with, that there are very few books which offer me harder reading than the Gospels. My difficulties are quite different from those which enabled the learned curiosity of the German mind to achieve one of its most unforgettable triumphs. It is a long while since I, like all other young scholars, enjoyed with all the sapient laboriousness of a fastidious philologist the work of the incomparable Strauss. At that time I was twenty years old: now I am too serious for that sort of thing. What do I care for the contradictions of “tradition”? How can any one call pious legends “traditions”? The histories of saints present the most dubious variety of literature in existence; to examine them by the scientific method, *in the entire absence of corroborative documents*, seems to me to condemn the whole inquiry from the start—it is simply learned idling....

29.

What concerns *me* is the psychological type of the Saviour. This type might be depicted in the Gospels, in however mutilated a form and however much overladen with extraneous characters—that is, in *spite* of the Gospels; just as the figure of Francis of Assisi shows itself in his legends in spite of his legends. It is *not* a question of mere truthful evidence as to what he did, what he said and how he actually died; the question is, whether his type is still conceivable, whether it has been handed down to us.—All the attempts that I know of to read the *history* of a “soul” in the Gospels seem to me to reveal only a lamentable psychological levity. M. Renan, that mountebank *in psychologicus*, has contributed the two most *unseemly* notions to this business of explaining the type of Jesus: the notion of the *genius* and that of the *hero* (“*héros*”). But if there is anything essentially unevangelical, it is surely the concept of the hero. What the Gospels make instinctive is precisely the reverse of all heroic struggle, of all taste for conflict: the very incapacity for resistance is here converted into something moral: (“resist not evil!”—the most profound sentence in the Gospels, perhaps the true key to them), to wit, the blessedness of peace, of gentleness, the *inability* to be an enemy. What is the meaning of “glad tidings”?—The true life, the life eternal has been found—it is not merely promised, it is here, it is in *you*; it is the life that lies in love free from all retreats and exclusions, from all keeping of distances. Every one is the child of God—Jesus claims nothing for himself alone—as the child of God each man is the equal of every other man.... Imagine making Jesus a *hero*!—And what a tremendous misunderstanding appears in the word “genius”! Our whole conception of the “spiritual,” the whole conception of our civilization, could have had no meaning in the world that Jesus lived in. In the strict sense of the physiologist, a quite different word ought to be used here.... We all know that there is a morbid sensibility of the tactile nerves which causes those suffering from it to recoil from every touch, and from every effort to grasp a solid object. Brought to its logical conclusion, such a physiological *habitus* becomes an instinctive hatred of all reality, a flight into the “intangible,” into the “incomprehensible”; a distaste for all formulae, for all conceptions of time and space, for everything established—customs, institutions, the church—; a feeling of being at home in a world in which no sort of reality survives, a merely “inner” world, a “true” world, an “eternal” world.... “The Kingdom of God is within *you*”....

30.

The instinctive hatred of reality: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that merely to be “touched” becomes unendurable, for every sensation is too profound.

The instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all hostility, all bounds and distances in feeling: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that it senses all resistance, all compulsion to resistance, as unbearable *anguish* (—that is to say, *asharmful*, as *prohibited* by the instinct of self-preservation), and regards blessedness (joy) as possible only when it is no longer necessary to offer resistance to anybody or anything, however evil or dangerous—love, as the only, as the *ultimate* possibility of life....

These are the two *physiological realities* upon and out of which the doctrine of salvation has sprung. I call them a sublime super-development of hedonism upon a thoroughly unsalubrious soil. What stands most closely related to them, though with a large admixture of Greek vitality and nerve-force, is epicureanism, the theory of salvation of paganism. Epicurus was a *typical decadent*: I was the first to recognize him.—The fear of pain, even of infinitely slight pain—the end of this *can* be nothing save a *religion of love*....

31.

I have already given my answer to the problem. The prerequisite to it is the assumption that the type of the Saviour has reached us only in a greatly distorted form. This distortion is very probable: there are many reasons why a type of that sort should not be handed down in a pure form, complete and free of additions. The milieu in which this strange figure moved must have left marks upon him, and more must have been imprinted by the history, the *destiny*, of the early Christian communities; the latter indeed, must have embellished the type retrospectively with characters which can be understood only as serving the purposes of war and of propaganda. That strange and sickly world into which the Gospels lead us—a world apparently out of a Russian novel, in which the scum of society, nervous maladies and “childish” idiocy keep a tryst—must, in any case, have *coarsened* the type: the first disciples, in particular, must have been forced to translate an existence visible only in symbols and incomprehensibilities into their own crudity, in order to understand it at all—in their sight the type could take on reality only after it had been recast in a familiar mould.... The prophet, the messiah, the future judge, the teacher of morals, the worker of wonders, John the Baptist—all these merely presented chances to misunderstand it.... Finally, let us not underrate the *proprium* of all great, and especially all sectarian veneration: it tends to erase from the venerated objects all its original traits and idiosyncrasies, often so painfully strange—it *does not even see them*. It is greatly to be regretted that no Dostoyevsky lived in the neighbourhood of this most interesting *décadent*—I mean some one who would have felt the poignant charm of such a compound of the sublime, the morbid and the childish. In the last analysis, the type, as a type of the *décadence*, may actually have been peculiarly complex and contradictory: such a possibility is not to be lost sight of. Nevertheless, the probabilities seem to be against it, for in that case tradition would have been particularly accurate and objective, whereas we have reasons for assuming the contrary. Meanwhile, there is a contradiction between the peaceful preacher of the mount, the sea-shore and the fields, who appears like a new Buddha on a soil very unlike India’s, and the aggressive fanatic, the mortal enemy of theologians and ecclesiastics, who stands glorified by Renan’s malice as “*le grand maître en ironie*.” I myself haven’t any doubt that the greater part of this venom (and no less of *esprit*) got itself into the concept of the Master only as a result of the excited nature of Christian propaganda: we all know the unscrupulousness of sectarians when they set out to turn their leader into an *apologia* for themselves. When the early Christians had need of an adroit, contentious, pugnacious and maliciously subtle theologian to tackle other theologians, they *created* a “god” that met that need, just as they put into his mouth without hesitation certain ideas that were necessary to them but that were utterly at odds with the Gospels—“the second coming,” “the last judgment,” all sorts of expectations and promises, current at the time.—

33.

In the whole psychology of the “Gospels” the concepts of guilt and punishment are lacking, and so is that of reward. “Sin,” which means anything that puts a distance between God and man, is abolished—*this is precisely the “glad tidings.”* Eternal bliss is not merely promised, nor is it bound up with conditions: it is conceived as the *only* reality—what remains consists merely of signs useful in speaking of it.

The *results* of such a point of view project themselves into a new *way of life*, the special evangelical way of life. It is not a “belief” that marks off the Christian; he is distinguished by a different mode of action; he acts *differently*. He offers no resistance, either by word or in his heart, to those who stand against him. He draws no distinction between strangers and

countrymen, Jews and Gentiles (“neighbour,” of course, means fellow-believer, Jew). He is angry with no one, and he despises no one. He neither appeals to the courts of justice nor heeds their mandates (“Swear not at all”)._He never under any circumstances divorces his wife, even when he has proofs of her infidelity.—And under all of this is one principle; all of it arises from one instinct.—

The life of the Saviour was simply a carrying out of this way of life—and so was his death.... He no longer needed any formula or ritual in his relations with God—not even prayer. He had rejected the whole of the Jewish doctrine of repentance and atonement; he *knew* that it was only by a *way* of life that one could feel one’s self “divine,” “blessed,” “evangelical,” a “child of God.” *Not* by “repentance,” *not* by “prayer and forgiveness” is the way to God: *only the Gospel way* leads to God—it is *itself* “God!”—What the Gospels *abolished* was the Judaism in the concepts of “sin,” “forgiveness of sin,” “faith,” “salvation through faith”—the whole *ecclesiastical* dogma of the Jews was denied by the “glad tidings.”

The deep instinct which prompts the Christian how to *live* so that he will feel that he is “in heaven” and is “immortal,” despite many reasons for feeling that he is *not* “in heaven”: this is the only psychological reality in “salvation.”—A new way of life, *not* a new faith....

35.

This “bearer of glad tidings” died as he lived and *taught*—*not* to “save mankind,” but to show mankind how to live. It was a *way of life* that he bequeathed to man: his demeanour before the judges, before the officers, before his accusers—his demeanour on the *cross*. He does not resist; he does not defend his rights; he makes no effort to ward off the most extreme penalty—more, *he invites it*.... And he prays, suffers and loves *with* those, *in* those, who do him evil.... *Not* to defend one’s self, *not* to show anger, *not* to lay blames.... On the contrary, to submit even to the Evil One—to *love* him....

40.

—The fate of the Gospels was decided by death—it hung on the “cross.”... It was only death, that unexpected and shameful death; it was only the cross, which was usually reserved for the canaille only—it was only this appalling paradox which brought the disciples face to face with the real riddle: “*Who was it? what was it?*”—The feeling of dismay, of profound affront and injury; the suspicion that such a death might involve a *refutation* of their cause; the terrible question, “Why just in this way?”—this state of mind is only too easy to understand. Here everything *must* be accounted for as necessary; everything must have a meaning, a reason, the highest sort of reason; the love of a disciple excludes all chance. Only then did the chasm of doubt yawn: “*Who* put him to death? who was his natural enemy?”—this question flashed like a lightning-stroke. Answer: dominant Judaism, its ruling class. From that moment, one found one’s self in revolt *against* the established order, and began to understand Jesus as *in revolt against the established order*. Until then this militant, this nay-saying, nay-doing element in his character had been lacking; what is more, he had appeared to present its opposite. Obviously, the little community had *not* understood what was precisely the most important thing of all: the example offered by this way of dying, the freedom from and superiority to every feeling of *ressentiment*—a plain indication of how little he was understood at all! All that Jesus could hope to accomplish by his death, in itself, was to offer the strongest possible proof, or *example*, of his teachings in the most public manner.... But his disciples were very far from *forgiving* his death—though to have

done so would have accorded with the Gospels in the highest degree; and neither were they prepared to *offer* themselves, with gentle and serene calmness of heart, for a similar death.... On the contrary, it was precisely the most unevangelical of feelings, *revenge*, that now possessed them. It seemed impossible that the cause should perish with his death: “recompense” and “judgment” became necessary (—yet what could be less evangelical than “recompense,” “punishment,” and “sitting in judgment”!). Once more the popular belief in the coming of a messiah appeared in the foreground; attention was rivetted upon an historical moment: the “kingdom of God” is to come, with judgment upon his enemies.... But in all this there was a wholesale misunderstanding: imagine the “kingdom of God” as a last act, as a mere promise! The Gospels had been, in fact, the incarnation, the fulfilment, the *realization* of this “kingdom of God.” It was only now that all the familiar contempt for and bitterness against Pharisees and theologians began to appear in the character of the Master—he was thereby *turned* into a Pharisee and theologian himself! On the other hand, the savage veneration of these completely unbalanced souls could no longer endure the Gospel doctrine, taught by Jesus, of the equal right of all men to be children of God: their revenge took the form of *elevating* Jesus in an extravagant fashion, and thus separating him from themselves: just as, in earlier times, the Jews, to revenge themselves upon their enemies, separated themselves from their God, and placed him on a great height. The One God and the Only Son of God: both were products of *ressentiment*....

41.

—And from that time onward an absurd problem offered itself: “how *could* God allow it!” To which the deranged reason of the little community formulated an answer that was terrifying in its absurdity: God gave his son as a *sacrifice* for the forgiveness of sins. At once there was an end of the gospels! Sacrifice for sin, and in its most obnoxious and barbarous form: sacrifice of the *innocent* for the sins of the guilty! What appalling paganism!—Jesus himself had done away with the very concept of “guilt,” he denied that there was any gulf fixed between God and man; he *lived* this unity between God and man, and that was precisely *his* “glad tidings”.... And *not* as a mere privilege!—From this time forward the type of the Saviour was corrupted, bit by bit, by the doctrine of judgment and of the second coming, the doctrine of death as a sacrifice, the doctrine of the *resurrection*, by means of which the entire concept of “blessedness,” the whole and only reality of the gospels, is juggled away—in favour of a state of existence *afterdeath*!... St. Paul, with that rabbinical impudence which shows itself in all his doings, gave a logical quality to that conception, that *indecent* conception, in this way: “If Christ did not rise from the dead, then all our faith is in vain!”—And at once there sprang from the Gospels the most contemptible of all unfulfillable promises, the *shameless* doctrine of personal immortality.... Paul even preached it as a *reward*....

42.

...Christianity promises everything, but *fulfils nothing*.—Hard upon the heels of the “glad tidings” came the worst imaginable: those of Paul. In Paul is incarnated the very opposite of the “bearer of glad tidings”; he represents the genius for hatred, the vision of hatred, the relentless logic of hatred. *What*, indeed, has not this dysangelist sacrificed to hatred! Above all, the Saviour: he nailed him to *his own* cross. The life, the example, the teaching, the death of Christ, the meaning and the law of the whole gospels—nothing was left of all this after that counterfeiter in hatred had reduced it to his uses. Surely *not* reality; surely *no* historical truth!... Once more the priestly instinct of the Jew perpetrated the same old master

crime against history—he simply struck out the yesterday and the day before yesterday of Christianity, and *invented his own history of Christian beginnings*. Going further, he treated the history of Israel to another falsification, so that it became a mere prologue to *his* achievement: all the prophets, it now appeared, had referred to *his* “Saviour.”... Later on the church even falsified the history of man in order to make it a prologue to Christianity.... The figure of the Saviour, his teaching, his way of life, his death, the meaning of his death, even the consequences of his death—nothing remained untouched, nothing remained in even remote contact with reality. Paul simply shifted the centre of gravity of that whole life to a place *behind* this existence—in the *lie* of the “risen” Jesus. At bottom, he had no use for the life of the Saviour—what he needed was the death on the cross, *and* something more. To see anything honest in such a man as Paul, whose home was at the centre of the Stoical enlightenment, when he converts an hallucination into a *proof* of the resurrection of the Saviour, or even to believe his tale that he suffered from this hallucination himself—this would be a genuine *niaiserie* in a psychologist. Paul willed the end; *therefore* he also willed the means.... What he himself didn’t believe was swallowed readily enough by the idiots among whom he spread *his* teaching.—What *he* wanted was power; in Paul the priest once more reached out for power—he had use only for such concepts, teachings and symbols as served the purpose of tyrannizing over the masses and organizing mobs. *What* was the only part of Christianity that Mohammed borrowed later on? Paul’s invention, his device for establishing priestly tyranny and organizing the mob: the belief in the immortality of the soul—that is to say, *the doctrine of “judgment”*....

43.

When the centre of gravity of life is placed, *not* in life itself, but in “the beyond”—in *nothingness*—then one has taken away its centre of gravity altogether. The vast lie of personal immortality destroys all reason, all natural instinct—henceforth, everything in the instincts that is beneficial, that fosters life and that safeguards the future is a cause of suspicion. So to live that life no longer has any meaning: *this* is now the “meaning” of life.... Why be public-spirited? Why take any pride in descent and forefathers? Why labour together, trust one another, or concern one’s self about the common welfare, and try to serve it?... Merely so many “temptations,” so many strayings from the “straight path.”—“*One* thing only is necessary”.... That every man, because he has an “immortal soul,” is as good as every other man; that in an infinite universe of things the “salvation” of *every* individual may lay claim to eternal importance; that insignificant bigots and the three-fourths insane may assume that the laws of nature are constantly *suspended* in their behalf—it is impossible to lavish too much contempt upon such a magnification of every sort of selfishness to infinity, to *insolence*. And yet Christianity has to thank precisely *this* miserable flattery of personal vanity for its *triumph*—it was thus that it lured all the botched, the dissatisfied, the fallen upon evil days, the whole refuse and off-scouring of humanity to its side. The “salvation of the soul”—in plain English: “the world revolves around *me*.”... The poisonous doctrine, “*equal* rights for all,” has been propagated as a Christian principle: out of the secret nooks and crannies of bad instinct Christianity has waged a deadly war upon all feelings of reverence and distance between man and man, which is to say, upon the first *prerequisite* to every step upward, to every development of civilization—out of the *ressentiment* of the masses it has forged its chief weapons against *us*, against everything noble, joyous and high-spirited on earth, against our happiness on earth.... To allow “immortality” to every Peter and Paul was the greatest, the most vicious outrage upon *noble* humanity ever perpetrated.—*And* let us not underestimate the fatal influence that Christianity has had, even upon politics! Nowadays no one has courage any more for special rights, for the right

of dominion, for feelings of honourable pride in himself and his equals—for the *pathos of distance*.... Our politics is sick with this lack of courage!—The aristocratic attitude of mind has been undermined by the lie of the equality of souls; and if belief in the “privileges of the majority” makes and *will continue to make* revolutions—it is Christianity, let us not doubt, and *Christian* valuations, which convert every revolution into a carnival of blood and crime! Christianity is a revolt of all creatures that creep on the ground against everything that is *lofty*: the gospel of the “lowly” *lowers*....

50.

—In this place I can’t permit myself to omit a psychology of “belief,” of the “believer,” for the special benefit of “believers.” If there remain any today who do not yet know how *indecent* it is to be “believing”—or how much a sign of *décadence*, of a broken will to live—then they will know it well enough tomorrow. My voice reaches even the deaf.—It appears, unless I have been incorrectly informed, that there prevails among Christians a sort of criterion of truth that is called “proof by power.” “Faith makes blessed: *therefore* it is true.”—It might be objected right here that blessedness is not demonstrated, it is merely *promised*: it hangs upon “faith” as a condition—one *shall* be blessed *because* one believes.... But what of the thing that the priest promises to the believer, the wholly transcendental “beyond”—how is *that* to be demonstrated?—The “proof by power,” thus assumed, is actually no more at bottom than a belief that the effects which faith promises will not fail to appear. In a formula: “I believe that faith makes for blessedness—*therefore*, it is true.”... But this is as far as we may go. This “therefore” would be *absurdum* itself as a criterion of truth.—But let us admit, for the sake of politeness, that blessedness by faith may be demonstrated (—*not* merely hoped for, and *not* merely promised by the suspicious lips of a priest): even so, *could* blessedness—in a technical term, *pleasure*—ever be a proof of truth? So little is this true that it is almost a proof against truth when sensations of pleasure influence the answer to the question “What is true?” or, at all events, it is enough to make that “truth” highly suspicious. The proof by “pleasure” is a proof *of* “pleasure”—nothing more; why in the world should it be assumed that *true* judgments give more pleasure than false ones, and that, in conformity to some pre-established harmony, they necessarily bring agreeable feelings in their train?—The experience of all disciplined and profound minds teaches *the contrary*. Man has had to fight for every atom of the truth, and has had to pay for it almost everything that the heart, that human love, that human trust cling to. Greatness of soul is needed for this business: the service of truth is the hardest of all services.—What, then, is the meaning of *integrity* in things intellectual? It means that a man must be severe with his own heart, that he must scorn “beautiful feelings,” and that he makes every Yea and Nay a matter of conscience!—Faith makes blessed: *therefore*, it lies....

51.

The fact that faith, under certain circumstances, may work for blessedness, but that this blessedness produced by an *idée fixe* by no means makes the idea itself true, and the fact that faith actually moves no mountains, but instead *raises them up* where there were none before: all this is made sufficiently clear by a walk through a *lunatic asylum*. *Not*, of course, to a priest: for his instincts prompt him to the lie that sickness is not sickness and lunatic asylums not lunatic asylums. Christianity finds sickness *necessary*, just as the Greek spirit had need of a superabundance of health—the actual ulterior purpose of the whole system of salvation of the church is to *make* people ill. And the church itself—doesn’t it set up a Catholic lunatic asylum as the ultimate ideal?—The whole earth as a madhouse?—The

sort of religious man that the church *wants* is a typical *décadent*; the moment at which a religious crisis dominates a people is always marked by epidemics of nervous disorder; the “inner world” of the religious man is so much like the “inner world” of the overstrung and exhausted that it is difficult to distinguish between them; the “highest” states of mind, held up before mankind by Christianity as of supreme worth, are actually epileptoid in form—the church has granted the name of holy only to lunatics or to gigantic frauds *in majorem dei honorem*.... Once I ventured to designate the whole Christian system of *training* in penance and salvation (now best studied in England) as a method of producing a *folie circulaire* upon a soil already prepared for it, which is to say, a soil thoroughly unhealthy. Not every one may be a Christian: one is not “converted” to Christianity—one must first be sick enough for it.... We others, who have the *courage* for health and likewise for contempt,—we may well despise a religion that teaches misunderstanding of the body! that refuses to rid itself of the superstition about the soul! that makes a “virtue” of insufficient nourishment! that combats health as a sort of enemy, devil, temptation! that persuades itself that it is possible to carry about a “perfect soul” in a cadaver of a body, and that, to this end, had to devise for itself a new concept of “perfection,” a pale, sickly, idiotically ecstatic state of existence, so-called “holiness”—a holiness that is itself merely a series of symptoms of an impoverished, enervated and incurably disordered body!... The Christian movement, as a European movement, was from the start no more than a general uprising of all sorts of outcast and refuse elements (—who now, under cover of Christianity, aspire to power). It does *not* represent the decay of a race; it represents, on the contrary, a conglomeration of *décadence* products from all directions, crowding together and seeking one another out. It was *not*, as has been thought, the corruption of antiquity, of *noble* antiquity, which made Christianity possible; one cannot too sharply challenge the learned imbecility which today maintains that theory. At the time when the sick and rotten Chandala classes in the whole *imperium* were Christianized, the *contrary type*, the nobility, reached its finest and ripest development. The majority became master; democracy, with its Christian instincts, *triumphed*.... Christianity was not “national,” it was not based on race—it appealed to all the varieties of men disinherited by life, it had its allies everywhere. Christianity has the rancour of the sick at its very core—the instinct against the *healthy*, against *health*. Everything that is well-constituted, proud, gallant and, above all, beautiful gives offence to its ears and eyes. Again I remind you of Paul’s priceless saying: “And God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world, the *foolish* things of the world, the *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised*”: *this* was the formula; *in hoc signo the décadence* triumphed.—*God on the cross*—is man always to miss the frightful inner significance of this symbol?—Everything that suffers, everything that hangs on the cross, is *divine*.... We all hang on the cross, consequently *we* are divine.... We alone are divine.... Christianity was thus a victory: a nobler attitude of mind was destroyed by it—Christianity remains to this day the greatest misfortune of humanity.—

52.

Christianity also stands in opposition to all *intellectual* well-being,—sick reasoning is the only sort that it *can* use as Christian reasoning; it takes the side of everything that is idiotic; it pronounces a curse upon “intellect,” upon the *superbia* of the healthy intellect. Since sickness is inherent in Christianity, it follows that the typically Christian state of “faith” *must* be a form of sickness too, and that all straight, straightforward and scientific paths to knowledge *must* be banned by the church as *forbidden* ways. Doubt is thus a sin from the start.... The complete lack of psychological cleanliness in the priest—revealed by a glance at him—is a phenomenon *resulting* from *décadence*,—one may observe in hysterical

women and in rachitic children how regularly the falsification of instincts, delight in lying for the mere sake of lying, and incapacity for looking straight and walking straight are symptoms of *décadence*. “Faith” means the will to avoid knowing what is true. The pietist, the priest of either sex, is a fraud *because* he is sick: his instinct *demand*s that the truth shall never be allowed its rights on any point. “Whatever makes for illness is *good*; whatever issues from abundance, from superabundance, from power, is *evil*”: so argues the believer. *The impulse to lie*—it is by this that I recognize every foreordained theologian.—Another characteristic of the theologian is his *unfitness for philology*. What I here mean by philology is, in a general sense, the art of reading with profit—the capacity for absorbing facts *without* interpreting them falsely, and *without* losing caution, patience and subtlety in the effort to understand them. Philology *asephexis* in interpretation: whether one be dealing with books, with newspaper reports, with the most fateful events or with weather statistics—not to mention the “salvation of the soul.”... The way in which a theologian, whether in Berlin or in Rome, is ready to explain, say, a “passage of Scripture,” or an experience, or a victory by the national army, by turning upon it the high illumination of the Psalms of David, is always so *daring* that it is enough to make a philologist run up a wall. But what shall he do when pietists and other such cows from Suabia use the “finger of God” to convert their miserably commonplace and huggermugger existence into a miracle of “grace,” a “providence” and an “experience of salvation”? The most modest exercise of the intellect, not to say of decency, should certainly be enough to convince these interpreters of the perfect childishness and unworthiness of such a misuse of the divine digital dexterity. However small our piety, if we ever encountered a god who always cured us of a cold in the head at just the right time, or got us into our carriage at the very instant heavy rain began to fall, he would seem so absurd a god that he’d have to be abolished even if he existed. God as a domestic servant, as a letter carrier, as an almanac-man—at bottom, he is a mere name for the stupidest sort of chance.... “Divine Providence,” which every third man in “educated Germany” still believes in, is so strong an argument against God that it would be impossible to think of a stronger. And in any case it is an argument against Germans!...

56.

—In the last analysis it comes to this: what is the *end* of lying? The fact that, in Christianity, “holy” ends are not visible is *my* objection to the means it employs. Only *bad* ends appear: the poisoning, the calumination, the denial of life, the despising of the body, the degradation and self-contamination of man by the concept of sin—*therefore*, its means are also bad.—I have a contrary feeling when I read the Code of Manu, an incomparably more intellectual and superior work, which it would be a sin against the *intelligence* to so much as *name* in the same breath with the Bible. It is easy to see why: there is a genuine philosophy behind it, *in* it, not merely an evil-smelling mess of Jewish rabbinism and superstition,—it gives even the most fastidious psychologist something to sink his teeth into. And, *not* to forget what is most important, it differs fundamentally from every kind of Bible: by means of it the *nobles*, the philosophers and the warriors keep the whip-hand over the majority; it is full of noble valuations, it shows a feeling of perfection, an acceptance of life, and triumphant feeling toward self and life—the *sun* shines upon the whole book.—All the things on which Christianity vents its fathomless vulgarity—for example, procreation, women and marriage—are here handled earnestly, with reverence and with love and confidence. How can any one really put into the hands of children and ladies a book which contains such vile things as this: “to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband; ... it is better to marry than to burn”? And is it *possible* to be a Christian so long as the origin of man is Christianized, which is to say, *befouled*, by the

doctrine of the *immaculata conceptio*?... I know of no book in which so many delicate and kindly things are said of women as in the Code of Manu; these old grey-beards and saints have a way of being gallant to women that it would be impossible, perhaps, to surpass. "The mouth of a woman," it says in one place, "the breasts of a maiden, the prayer of a child and the smoke of sacrifice are always pure." In another place: "there is nothing purer than the light of the sun, the shadow cast by a cow, air, water, fire and the breath of a maiden." Finally, in still another place—perhaps this is also a holy lie—: "all the orifices of the body above the navel are pure, and all below are impure. Only in the maiden is the whole body pure."

58.

In point of fact, the end for which one lies makes a great difference: whether one preserves thereby or destroys. There is a perfect likeness between Christian and anarchist: their object, their instinct, points only toward destruction. One need only turn to history for a proof of this: there it appears with appalling distinctness. We have just studied a code of religious legislation whose object it was to convert the conditions which cause life to flourish into an "eternal" social organization,—Christianity found its mission in putting an end to such an organization, *because life flourished under it*. There the benefits that reason had produced during long ages of experiment and insecurity were applied to the most remote uses, and an effort was made to bring in a harvest that should be as large, as rich and as complete as possible; here, on the contrary, the harvest is *blighted* overnight.... That which stood there *aere perennis*, the *imperium Romanum*, the most magnificent form of organization under difficult conditions that has ever been achieved, and compared to which everything before it and after it appears as patchwork, bungling, *dilletantism*—those holy anarchists made it a matter of "piety" to destroy "the world," *which is to say*, the *imperium Romanum*, so that in the end not a stone stood upon another—and even Germans and other such louts were able to become its masters.... The Christian and the anarchist: both are *décadents*; both are incapable of any act that is not disintegrating, poisonous, degenerating, *blood-sucking*; both have an instinct of *mortal hatred* of everything that stands up, and is great, and has durability, and promises life a future.... Christianity was the vampire of the *imperium Romanum*,—overnight it destroyed the vast achievement of the Romans: the conquest of the soil for a great culture *that could await its time*. Can it be that this fact is not yet understood? The *imperium Romanum* that we know, and that the history of the Roman provinces teaches us to know better and better,—this most admirable of all works of art in the grand manner was merely the beginning, and the structure to follow was not to *prove* its worth for thousands of years. To this day, nothing on a like scale *sub specie aeterni* has been brought into being, or even dreamed of!—This organization was strong enough to withstand bad emperors: the accident of personality has nothing to do with such things—the *first* principle of all genuinely great architecture. But it was not strong enough to stand up against the *corruptest* of all forms of corruption—against Christians.... These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual, sucking him dry of all earnest interest in *inreal* things, of all instinct for *reality*—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all "souls," step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own *pride*. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the *unio mystica* in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all *that* sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form,

Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know *what* Epicurus made war upon—*not* paganism, but “Christianity,” which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the *subterranean* cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine *salvation*.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—*when Paul appeared ...* Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of “the world,” in the flesh and inspired by genius—the Jew, the *eternal Jew par excellence*.... What he saw was how, with the aid of the small sectarian Christian movement that stood apart from Judaism, a “world conflagration” might be kindled; how, with the symbol of “God on the cross,” all secret seditions, all the fruits of anarchistic intrigues in the empire, might be amalgamated into one immense power. “Salvation is of the Jews.”—Christianity is the formula for exceeding *and* summing up the subterranean cults of all varieties, that of Osiris, that of the Great Mother, that of Mithras, for instance: in his discernment of this fact the genius of Paul showed itself. His instinct was here so sure that, with reckless violence to the truth, he put the ideas which lent fascination to every sort of Chandala religion into the mouth of the “Saviour” as his own inventions, and not only into the mouth—he *made* out of him something that even a priest of Mithras could understand.... This was his revelation at Damascus: he grasped the fact that he *needed* the belief in immortality in order to rob “the world” of its value, that the concept of “hell” would master Rome—that the notion of a “beyond” is the *death of life*.... Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme in German, and they do more than rhyme....

59.

The whole labour of the ancient world gone for *naught*: I have no word to describe the feelings that such an enormity arouses in me.—And, considering the fact that its labour was merely preparatory, that with adamant self-consciousness it laid only the foundations for a work to go on for thousands of years, the whole *meaning* of antiquity disappears!... To what end the Greeks? to what end the Romans?—All the prerequisites to a learned culture, all the *methods* of science, were already there; man had already perfected the great and incomparable art of reading profitably—that first necessity to the tradition of culture, the unity of the sciences; the natural sciences, in alliance with mathematics and mechanics, were on the right road,—*the sense of fact*, the last and more valuable of all the senses, had its schools, and its traditions were already centuries old! Is all this properly understood? Every *essential* to the beginning of the work was ready:—and the *most* essential, it cannot be said too often, are methods, and also the most difficult to develop, and the longest opposed by habit and laziness. What we have today reconquered, with unspeakable self-discipline, for ourselves—for certain bad instincts, certain Christian instincts, still lurk in our bodies—that is to say, the keen eye for reality, the cautious hand, patience and seriousness in the smallest things, the whole *integrity* of knowledge—all these things were already there, and had been there for two thousand years! *More*, there was also a refined and excellent tact and taste! *Not* as mere brain-drilling! *Not* as “German” culture, with its loutish manners! But as body, as bearing, as instinct—in short, as reality.... *All gone for naught!* Overnight it became merely a memory!—The Greeks! The Romans! Instinctive nobility, taste, methodical inquiry, genius for organization and administration, faith in and the *will* to secure the future of man, a great yes to everything entering into the *imperium Romanum* and palpable to all the senses, a grand style that was beyond mere art, but had become reality, truth, *life*....—All overwhelmed in a night, but not by a convulsion of nature! Not trampled to death by Teutons and others of heavy hoof! But brought to shame by crafty, sneaking, invisible, anæmic vampires! Not conquered,—only sucked dry!... Hidden vengefulness,

petty envy, became *master!* Everything wretched, intrinsically ailing, and invaded by bad feelings, the whole *ghetto-world* of the soul, was at once *on top!*—One needs but read any of the Christian agitators, for example, St. Augustine, in order to realize, in order to smell, what filthy fellows came to the top. It would be an error, however, to assume that there was any lack of understanding in the leaders of the Christian movement:—ah, but they were clever, clever to the point of holiness, these fathers of the church! What they lacked was something quite different. Nature neglected—perhaps forgot—to give them even the most modest endowment of respectable, of upright, of *cleanly* instincts.... Between ourselves, they are not even men.... If Islam despises Christianity, it has a thousandfold right to do so: Islam at least assumes that it is dealing with *men*....

62.

—With this I come to a conclusion and pronounce my judgment. I *condemn* Christianity; I bring against the Christian church the most terrible of all the accusations that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. It is, to me, the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it seeks to work the ultimate corruption, the worst possible corruption. The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul. Let any one dare to speak to me of its “humanitarian” blessings! Its deepest necessities range it against any effort to abolish distress; it lives by distress; it *creates* distress to make *itself* immortal.... For example, the worm of sin: it was the church that first enriched mankind with this misery!—The “equality of souls before God”—this fraud, this *pretext* for the *rancunes* of all the base-minded—this explosive concept, ending in revolution, the modern idea, and the notion of overthrowing the whole social order —this is *Christian* dynamite.... The “humanitarian” blessings of Christianity forsooth! To breed out of *humanitas* a self-contradiction, an art of self-pollution, a will to lie at any price, an aversion and contempt for all good and honest instincts! All this, to me, is the “humanitarianism” of Christianity!—Parasitism as the *only* practice of the church; with its anæmic and “holy” ideals, sucking all the blood, all the love, all the hope out of life; the beyond as the will to deny all reality; the cross as the distinguishing mark of the most subterranean conspiracy ever heard of,—against health, beauty, well-being, intellect, *kindness* of soul—*against life itself*....

This eternal accusation against Christianity I shall write upon all walls, wherever walls are to be found—I have letters that even the blind will be able to see.... I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are venomous enough, or secret, subterranean and *small* enough,—I call it the one immortal blemish upon the human race....

And mankind reckons *time* from the *dies nefastus* when this fatality befell—from the *first* day of Christianity!—*Why not rather from its last?—From today?*—The transvaluation of all values!...

Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Antichrist*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918.

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