

Cheeky English

Written by shabait Administrator
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A tall, drunken teenage boy staggers into the study room and walks up to two girls engrossed in their group work.

“And how are my sainted sisters doing this evening?” he slurs.

The girls merely raise their eyes and give him agitated look.

“D-don’t give me the martyred look na—I didn’t know we’d a group assignment” he grumbles.

“Look Mat, for your own sake, be serious—” the older girl starts.

“Spare me from another of your sermons, hun” he interrupts as he struggles to sit down, “just throw me my part, ok?”

He squints over the slip of paper given to him, unable to read it, let alone understand. “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” he smirks.

The above exchange is an ordinary conversation between a wayward boy and his dutiful group mates, using fitting colloquial language. What is remarkable about the conversation, which might escape cursory reading or listening, is the use of sacred religious expressions sainted, martyred, sermon, and the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak reduced to ordinary, cheeky and insolent use. What is even more remarkable is these are not in-group slang, but standard English usage.

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Sainted is a highly reverent concept in Christianity. According to Christianity, a person who is pious and has led the life of goodness and gained grace in the eyes of God is canonized and becomes a saint. The word has acquired another, cheeky sense. The boy, in the above conversation, refers to the two girls as sainted as a way of poking fun at their dutifulness and kindness. In essence, it is reduced to an expression of cheap wit.

Martyred—and its root martyr—is originally a Christian term referring to a person who lays down one's life for the sake one's own faith. This selfless act has picked up another, defamatory sense: "Showing pain and suffering so that people will be kind and sympathetic towards you." Similarly, sermon, 'an address or discourse delivered to an assembly of Christians, typically containing theological or moral instruction' (Wikipedia 2017) has also come to mean a long, tedious moral advice. This is further explicated in the disapproving sense its derivational form sermonize has come to denote: "to give moral advice, especially when it is annoying or boring." Similarly, its synonym 'preach' has also acquired the same discourteous sense: "to give [somebody] advice on morals, behaviour etc. especially in a way that they find annoying or boring". Thus, the example reads, 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean to preach,' where the speaker apologizes for 'preaching'. Hence, by implication, sermon and preach, to put it simply, are annoying and boring.

The most blatant insolence in the above discourse is the impudent use of the idiom the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The idiom alludes to the statement Jesus Christ makes in the Book of Matthew. Jesus, his soul troubled by the impending passion, speaks to the three disciples in attendance: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Hence, the use of the idiom in this context, to humorously say 'You intend to do good things, but you are too lazy, weak, or busy to actually do them', is a mockery of one of the most significant moments in Christianity, that of Christ undergoing insufferable ordeals and sacrifice for humanity.

The English language is littered with many such irreverence and sacrilege. The phrase 'the holy of holies', for instance, is the most holy place in the Church, where, Christians believe, God dwelt, but the dictionary tells us that it can also be used in a humorous sense. Hence, when a celebrity showing off his 'crib' to 2MTv Cribs says, "Now to the holy of holiest, our bedroom, where all the magic happens," he is using the expression in the standard sense. The other taint on the word 'holy' is in its interjection form. English speakers exclaim, "Holy cow!" or worse "Holy shit!" when they are surprised.

Christian names have also become subjects of this impudence. Peter is a verb in the phrasal verb 'peter out' to mean 'to gradually become smaller, quieter etc.' Peter as well as Paul also

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feature in the idiom 'rob Peter to pay Paul' and the meaning is also negative: "to borrow money from one person to pay back what you owe to another person". Seemingly harmless, this idiom insinuates nonsensical act. St. Bernard is made immortal in English because a species of dog is named after him—at least, the breed are known for helping find people lost in snow. John has not been as lucky as St. Bernard because his name in American English means 'toilet'. The pinnacle of all names in Christianity, Christ, has not escaped abuse in the hands of English language. Its derivational form, 'christen', 'to give a name to a baby at his or her baptism to welcome him or her into the Christian church', has acquired an additional, disrespectful sense: 'to use [something] for the first time'. The example given under this sense in the dictionary is particularly interesting: "Let's have a drink to christen our new glasses".

The flip side of this insolence in English language is the normalization and often exaltation of evil and devilishness. To observe this fact, you do not need to go any further than looking up the word 'devil' in the dictionary and check its different uses. For instance, you come across the appalling example, "I miss the old devil, now that he's gone", where the word is almost an affectionate term. 'Be a devil!' is a saying speakers use 'to encourage [somebody] to do [something] that they are not sure about doing' and, hence, the example, "Go on, be a devil, buy the both of them'. Similarly, 'sell my soul to the devil' is just an expression meaning to want something very much. Thus, there is nothing out of place in the statement 'I would sell myself to the devil for a vacation in Paris,' other than the speaker's desire to visit Paris.

Perhaps the word 'wicked' sums up how degenerate the English language has become. Wicked meant 'morally bad' close in meaning in the religious sense to 'evil or sinful', as in, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before... the Lord exceedingly" (Genesis 13:13) Later, it developed another sense, which is 'slightly bad, but in a way that is amusing and/or attractive' like 'a wicked sense of humour' meaning funny in a mischievous way. Now, the word has acquired an opposite meaning, which the dictionary bluntly puts as 'very good'. Hence, a child who receives a wonderful gift from his mom exclaims in joy "Mom, that's wicked!!"

Imagine a priest, who sees a boy cleverly stealing from a passer-by, saying to him, "Son, what you have just done is wicked!"

The boy would reply, "Oh, really. Thanks, man. Didn't think you, of all people, would appreciate it," because to people his age 'wicked' means 'very good'.

This development has its roots in the growing detachment of the masses from religion after the

beginning of industrialization. The secular rule afterwards have been supportive of this growing drift away from religion, for they believed, that the fear of the awaiting doom was crippling citizens from participating fully in public life. The result is the introduction of sacrilegious use of Christian terms and expressions first as slangs in different groups. They gradually gained wider use and eventually made it into Standard English usage.

Today, English is at its most susceptible to degenerative influences with the popularity of the Hip Hop and Hollywood movies. Some of their innovations are already making their way to Standard English. Credit to the propagation of popular culture, 'Virgin Mary' is one of the worst things you can call a young girl: a prude, uninteresting virgin (Virginity is not a virtue anymore; there must be something wrong with a girl above 16 who is virgin).

The whole issue under discussion might sound trivial or just harmless wit at worst, but it has sinister bearing: it is part of the larger attack against what is divine, religious, and moral through the degenerate popular culture that the media barrage us with. The overall strategy of the attack on all fronts is to desensitize us to the holy and divine as well as draw us in to the evil and wicked, ('wicked' in the sense of 'morally bad' and not in 'very good') and ultimately gives us over to moral depravity. As a result, moral depravities such as same sex marriage are the order of the day.

However, language, our only means of communication, thought, and one we transmit to our off spring, with all its lasting marks of vulgarity all over it (on top of swear words and obscenities) can only be the reflection of how deep evil has sunk its filthy nails into our soul. It is not too difficult to see where this is headed: English language as we know it will be rendered incapable of expressing anything remotely religious or moral, even as simple as writing an article to say it is becoming degenerate, as the one you are reading now, in as little as thirty years' time. Only then will English have completed its growth as the world language of the New World Order.

1. All the definitions of words are from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 6th edition, unless specified.

2. A reality television program broadcast by MTV channel that features tours of the houses and mansions of celebrities