

My Honest Opinions.*[Continued from last week.]*

Do you say that I write severely? I appeal to every person of thought and experience who has read even a little history to say candidly if I am not justified by the facts. And whether I am the fool of philosophy or the philosopher of fools, I prefer to be honest to myself and to my fellow men and maintain my own self-respect, rather than gain a little worldly popularity by making my life a personification of hypocrisy and lying.

Christians claim that they have two chances to my one: that if I am right, they are all safe with the rest of us; that if I am wrong, they are safe while I am left. I don't see it that way. If they are right and I should profess to believe with them, I would go to hell for lying, sure. A large majority of them would be there, or come there, also, but that would not help me any, so I prefer to be honest and take my chances. If deity don't know its own business and attend to it, wherefore should sin be laid to my charge? But all this is too foolish to write about, and I only do it for the benefit of those who are simple enough to believe in Christianity.

As I have said above, and here repeat, religion (that is any good) consists in living a right(eous) life here. The future will take care of itself. We have no part or knowledge in coming here; we will have no part or knowledge in going. The wisest man the Christians tell us of is represented to have said:

"There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come, with those that shall come after."

And, moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. And I said in my heart, God [deity] shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every purpose and for every work. I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God [deity] might manifest them and that they might see that they themselves were beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them. As one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no preeminence over a beast, for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of a man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion, for who shall bring him to see that which shall be after him? Go thy way, therefore, and eat thy bread with

joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God (Deity?) now accepteth thy work. Let thy garment be always white and thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life which he [Deity?] hath given thee under the sun, for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."

And if Solomon was so wise that "none were like unto him before him, neither should any be after him," and knew what he was talking about, I am all right. If Christians say that I have garbled or perverted Solomon, I reply, let him among you that is without this sin, cast the first stone at me.

The devil may quote scripture on occasion, Christians tell us, and if I have deemed it better to "bear the rebuke of the wise than hearken to the song of fools," and have "suffered not my mouth to cause my flesh to sin," wherefore should I be adjudged a "sinner"?

"Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

But any system of supernatural religion is unnecessary. It is not even a useful convenience. It is a nuisance. The moral maxims of the ancient philosophers from time immemorial leave nothing more to be said. And their adaptation, rehashing and reiteration by religionists, and their claims to have originated them, is the veriest of rot.

The doctrine of a "fall" of mankind is only a pernicious fraud. Teach a child that he is naturally depraved, it is the surest way to deprave him. To teach that people are by nature good and true, and that every bad action is a departure from their normal condition, is the true way to elevate the moral character of young or old. I have a better opinion of "God" and my fellow beings than to believe that they are born naturally vile.

Christians have a right to think just as little of themselves as they choose; but they have no right to claim the same degree of degradation for others. The doctrine that "the greater the sinner the greater the saint" is the parent of untold crimes.

"Total depravity" is a beastly humbug. People are not naturally depraved. I have had sixty-nine years' experience, and I have found them by nature disposed to do right, to be honest and moral. There are exceptions, but the exceptions only prove the rule. Departure from rectitude is nearly always caused by heredity, environment and Christian teaching. Mostly the

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