

The Religion of a Geologist

Theology

THOMAS C. CHAMBERLAIN, in *The Open Court*, September, 1928:

My fundamental theological prepossession is that whoever made the cosmic system was honest about it, and he made us in the circumstances honest. That is, we could not have evolved for billions of years or so in a factitious way; we evolved on sound lines in general. We are all full of shortages and mistakes and all that, but fundamentally the thing is as we see it.

It is among my theological dogmas that the optimist and the pessimist are both fools, but that the optimist is the more comfortable fellow of the two, and I am an optimist—on the whole. That is to say, I do not believe that the whole thing is going all right, and I do not think that the whole thing is going all bad. I never could accept the doctrine of total depravity. On the whole, the system, as I see it, taking the heavens and the earth and all that is in the earth together, is working towards order and towards efficiency, and the amount of wastage, irregularity, of disorder, is

relatively small.

The things that disturb us are agitative and more or less destructive, but when you measure them up they are very, very small, compared with the orderly movements, which are so quiet we don't know anything about them.

The most comfortable religious opinion I have is that if an organization, an organism, or a being does not take itself into the universal system, the system cuts it out.

There may be more devils than saints in the world, but the devils die before the saints—they commit suicide. It is a fundamental theological principle of mine that the devil is a fool. He would not be a devil if he were not a fool. While he is acting smart and seems to be bright, he is playing the fool all the time. He ought to get in accord with things—in harmony with the system.

That is what righteousness is. For instance, I do the right thing when I go to breakfast and eat the proper food in the proper amount, and in so doing do the thing that is best for

my system. If I go down there and gorge myself, that is sin. Indulgence in strong liquor is destructive. So it is all through life. When we do the thing that fits us into the organization, into the general cosmos, and help on the system and work with it, both for ourselves and for the system, then we are cosmically righteous. If we do not, we are Mephistophelian, and the cosmos cuts us out.

It is to me a comforting thought that those who try to live in accord with their relations and obligations of all sorts prosper on the whole, and the others are killed off. If nine-tenths of the human race chooses to go to destruction, the one-tenth will live on.

Science News-Letter, October 13, 1928

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