THOUGHTS ON THEISM: WITH SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A PUBLIC RELIGIOUS SERVICE IN HARMONY WITH MODERN SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

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Thoughts on Theism: With Suggestions Towards a Public Religious Service in Harmony with Modern Science and Philosophy by Various

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VARIOUS

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HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF THY GLORY.

Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toll not, neither do they spin.

A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE UNTO YOU; THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THOUGHTS ON THEISM

WITH

SUGGESTIONS

TOWARDS

A PUBLIC RELIGIOUS SERVICE

· IN

HARMONY

WITH

MODERN SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY.

NINTH THOUSAND.

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.
1882.

"Great thoughts are heaving on the world's wide breast;
The Time is labouring with a mighty birth;
The old ideas fall!
Men wander up and down in wild unrest;
A sense of change preparing for the Earth
Broods over all."

Dr. CHARLES MACKAY.

PREFACE.

SINCE the publication of even the last edition of this pamphlet events occurring in the theological and religious world have steadily tended to bear out the contention which runs through the succeeding pages; namely, that the minds of the thoughtful amongst us are awakening to the necessity for a re-construction of the basis of religious faith. It is the aim of this pamphlet to show that, amidst the overthrow of once stable opinions, there yet remains a foundation on which a reasonable system of religion and worship, logical enough to satisfy the inquiring mind, may be firmly settled. It seems perfectly clear that, in a few years, no really intelligent person will tacitly accept as correct the dogmas of any church, whether they are founded on the Bible, or are what the clergy in general would style "merely human" in their origin. We have recently seen with what dire success a Scottish Free Church Professor has striven to study the Bible on philological and scientific methods. One thing, however, appears certain, that the culture of the age is quickly leaving the theological systems which served former generations, simply because the education of their generations did not place them on a basis admitting of inevitable theological growth. Now, the position of teachers and taught may be said to be reversed. The latter are often ahead of the pulpit. While the Archbishop of Canterbury is employing himself on issuing a special form of prayer for fine weather, intelligent persons will turn to the meteorological charts and predictions supplied in the newspapers. In times of cholera and typhoid fever we cleanse our drains, and look to our water supply. These facts are signs not to be despised, or passed lightly by. They indicate that we are drifting-whither, in all things, we may not exactly know. If, however, by excluding Optimism on the one hand, and Pessimism on the other, as two obvious errors, and by taking the world at its manifest worth, there is ample evidence remaining that something short of Agnosticism is possible for the educated mind,-or that there still may exist a faith and a religion compatible with true philosophy and modern science, and through which man may express his sense of gratitude for what he is, and what he may become; then the object of this pamphlet will have been fully achieved. It is in the hope that its teaching may be of service in showing how a satisfying religion can co-exist with science the most advanced, that this new edition is now offered to the public.

October, 1882.

PREFACE TO THE PEOPLE'S EDITION.

The issue of this pamphlet has already reached a Seventh Thousand. It has been suggested by some of its readers that a still larger circulation might be obtained, if a People's Edition were printed at a merely nominal price. Accordingly, in the hope that a wider publicity may thus be gained for the views herein presented, this People's Edition is now offered to the public.

We believe that a more rational theology, and an improved religious service, are greatly needed. We require a Church as wide as the wants of humanity, as catholic as the first and great commandment. Towards this end, in common with many thoughtful and earnest men, we work and wait.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more, But more of reverence in us dwell; That mind and soul according well, May make one music."

LONDON, 16th October, 1880.

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