

Freethought

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FREETHOUGHT is the antithesis of dogmatism. While dogmatism orders its votaries to think in a certain way, irrespective of the temperament and stage of development of the individual thinker, Freethought advises its adherents: "Find your path and stick to it, whether you be with the crowd or no." thus giving free play to every type of thinking mind. It is unnecessary for Freethought to be dogmatic; for, while the religionist is made, the Freethinker becomes.

At a certain stage of development, the ego refuses to accept dogmas as its mental pabulum, and demands the right to find its own pastures—to wander over the fields of thought in search of satisfaction.

It is the misfortune of dogmatic religion that it refuses to recognize this fundamental right of the emancipated ego. It is as though a man who lived upon beans and milk were to declare his diet the only "orthodox" one, and threaten everyone who did not share his dietary views with indigestion—even those who lived in countries where beans were almost unknown.

This, it seems to me, is the chief cause of that decay of religion that is so prominent a factor of modern progress. Religion is all for herding thinkers—or, rather, non-thinkers—together, and endeavouring to persuade them to be contented where they are.

This damnable doctrine of "being content in the position to which God has been pleased to call you," is the greatest bar Reform has to break. Like all inherently superstitious doctrines, however, this bar is inherently giving way before the tremendously strong current, of modern thought—a current that has become infinitely strengthened by the centuries of repression to which it has been subjected by ecclesiasticism. Truly, indeed, can we Freethinkers declare that "Out of evil cometh good." No martyr ever suffered, or ever will suffer, in vain.

The doctrine of "being content"—the doctrine of non-thought, non-desire, non-progress—is a fit teaching for slaves, who are too inert, too stupid to think for themselves. For, obviously, no reform is possible without the willing co-operation of a portion, at least, of those who are to benefit by that reform.

Also, like nearly all doctrines that have reference to "God," the teaching of "being content" is blasphemy against humanity.

If there be a God, all real progress must be an advance towards him, and whoso denies this blasphemes against the human race. By "real progress" I mean increase of happiness. By "happiness" I mean being in harmony with nature.

The difference between dogmatic Religion and Freethought is fundamental. Dogmatic Religion teaches us to satisfy a problematic God by denying certain nature; Freethought teaches us to satisfy nature by complying with her demands. Religion is based upon the shifting, barren, treacherous sands of metaphysics; Freethought upon the firm, slowly-changing rock of human nature.