

ARE not some of our people unduly exercised over the closing of the churches during the recent epidemic?

The arguments sound very much as though the various boards of health had ordered our churches closed forever and had further demanded of the modern Phineases a cessation of all kinds of prayer.

As a matter of fact, it seems to me, the boards of health had rightly the one idea in mind: the stopping of the plague through *scientific* means. They are not our spiritual leaders, and had they "talked religion" in connection with the epidemic would undoubtedly have met with considerable criticism—probably from our own Churchpeople, had the members of the boards of health been Christian Scientists.

There is no one who deprecates the closing of "my" church more than I do, but this does not prevent my remembering that the boards of health did not have "my" church in mind particularly. Rather, they were considering only "places of public gathering", and in this glorious democratic country no one set of us can ask special favors when the good of all is concerned. Let us not forget that the word *church*, from a *civil* standpoint, includes among other monstrosities the moving picture shows of a semi-religious character, held so frequently in Protestant meeting places on Sunday evenings. Thus the general closing order protected us Churchpeople from the spread of the disease through those hotbeds of breeding.

For this reason, perhaps, the boards of health are not deserving of such severe denunciations as some are inclined to offer. A little constructive criticism will go further toward bringing about a more desirable order if a future crisis arises.

The correspondent who suggests incense is perhaps offering a wiser solution than on first reading we are aware of. For when the history of incense is studied we find its early use often was connected with the need of purification as well as with the more solemn symbolism.

Other means whereby solemn services might be attended during a plague without endangering the health of the participants surely can be devised by clergy and people. Let these be studied, that we may hereafter be ready for any emergency.

Faithfully yours, ELIZABETH MABEL BRYAN:

New York, November 15th.