



For the Torch of Reason.

God's Government.

BY D. PRIESTLEY.

God taketh away—we have to bow—
And who shall say, What doest thou?

If he will not withdraw his wrath,
The proud shall stoop along his path.

Behold, then, how much less shall I
Attempt to answer the Most High?

If right my cause, I would not state,
But my judge I'd supplicate.

And if an answer I receive
That he hearkened, I'd not believe.

For 'gainst me he his tempest draws
And woundeth me without a cause;

No respite gives to my distress,
But fills my soul with bitterness.

If speak of strength, he's strong indeed;
Of judgment, who sets time plead?

But this one thing, therefore, I said:
He spoils the righteous with the bad;

And, when his slaying scourge is sent,
He laughs at pain of innocent;

He covers judges' faces when
He gives the earth to wicked men.

If this is not, and cannot be,
Then tell me who and where is he?

Agnosticism.

BY SALADIN.

We believe that Agnosticism is the spirit of the age, and that all attempts to resist it must necessarily be abortive. It has oozed through the walls of the churches and saturated the pulpits. It has settled upon literature and turns the wheels of the cultured press. It has taken command of science and philosophy, and rests at last upon the muses. It is no mere mushroom development. It is a general cosmic tendency, and will assert itself. As well might you try to eject yourselves beyond the influence of the atmosphere as attempt to evade Agnosticism. Sooner will you empty the sea with a spoon than you will eject it from the study. Sooner will you stem the flowing tide than successfully resist the dominant thought-current of this era.

Did we believe that Agnosticism was the production of a single generation, or even a single century, we should have but little faith in its power to live and prosper, and should scarcely deem it worth a stroke of the pen. With us it would be a sufficient proof of inherent weakness that it had broken with the past. That which springs up in a day shall perish in a day; but that which takes centuries to develop shall, with modifications, stand forever. Did we confound Agnosticism with a mere sectarianism, claiming to be true and right itself, and condemning all other

isms as false, heretical and wrong, we should also have no faith in it. We would no longer regard it as a lever for the practical elevation of the race. Its mission is to teach men how foolish it is to tie up the spirit of Reason within the limits of any creed or special set of dogmas, and to set the mind of man free to soar into the Beyond, the Vast, the Unknown and unknowable, the Infinite, the Absolute. Nor should we have any vital faith in Agnosticism in case it could be identified with any individual in such a degree as to be what would not have existed in substance even if that individual had never appeared. For that which comes in substance (as opposed to form) with any one man shall perish with him. It is a revolutionary, not an evolutionary, product; it has broken with the past, and its mission is not to fulfill, but to destroy.

We come not to destroy, but to develop. If we pluck up, it is in order that we may plant, and facilitate the survival of the fittest. If we break down, it is for the express purpose of building a better structure upon a broader basis and a firmer foundation.

Roman Pontiffs.

BY MRS. M. M. TURNER.

Pope Leo XIII. in his first encyclical says: "We will never cease to contend for our restoration to that condition of things in which the provident design of the divine wisdom had formerly placed the Roman Pontiff. Not only because the civil sovereignty is necessary for the protection and preservation of the full liberty of the spiritual power, but because the interest of the public good and the salvation of the whole human society are involved."

Leo sees the design of divine wisdom in the former condition of things where the popes had power over life and death, the bodies and souls of men, almost equal to their god; when kings, emperors and monarchs could be summoned before the tribunal of the 'holy office' (the inquisition) and be forced to accept its judgments, be they of torture or death.

This pope does not seem to think that the condition of things existing today are the design of divine wisdom. He is not satisfied with the present rulings, so he will never cease to contend for a return to the things of the past, which means credulity, ignorance, superstition

and the inquisition; which means reason in burning fetters.

The god of today, "our father man," has with his microscope followed matter to its atoms, by new devices magnifying them 3,000,000 times. He has looked into the heavens with his telescope, has questioned the suns and the stars with his spectroscope; suns that the telescope cannot see have revealed themselves to the sensitive plate of the photographer. These statements are based upon proved and provable truths, here and now; on reason, growing ever and ever more clear and holy, ever purifying itself from falsehood and dishonesty. His commandments are the immutable laws of nature. Knowledge and science are "to the fore". There is no going back.

Prof. Guthres, who spoke for the divine and demonstrable laws of the universe, says: "The development of scientific knowledge will assuredly prove the sacred ark of our social and intellectual salvation, the star and column of fire which will lead us out of the wilderness of our perplexities into the promised land of peace and prosperity."

In one of his lectures on "Science Teaching", Prof. Guthers said: "Of this at least you and all men may be assured, that I will not cease to proclaim, as long as strength is given me, that the hope of science is the hope of the world."

The pope will "never cease to contend" for civil sovereignty. Prof. Guthers will never cease to proclaim, as long as strength is given him, that the hope of science is the hope of the world.

Often has science won in her warfare with theology. The future holds more glorious victories for her and humanity.

Atheism Justified.

BY JEAN MESLIER.

Without doubt the more to perplex matters, theologians have chosen to say nothing about what their god is; they tell us what he is not. By negations and abstractions they imagine themselves composing a real and perfect being, while there can result from it but a being of human reason. A spirit has no body; an infinite being is a being which is not finite; a perfect being is a being which is not imperfect. Can any one form any real notions of such a multitude of deficiencies or absence of ideas? That which excludes all idea, can it be any-

thing but nothingness? To pretend that the divine attributes are beyond the understanding of the human mind is to render God unfit for men. If we are assured that God is infinite, we admit that there can be nothing in common between him and his creatures. To say that God is infinite, is to destroy him for men, or at least render him useless to them.

God, we are told, created men intelligent, but he did not create them omniscient; that is to say, capable of knowing all things. We conclude that he was not able to endow him with intelligence sufficient to understand the divine essence. In this case it is demonstrated that God has neither the power nor the wish to be known by men. By what right could this god become angry with beings whose own essence makes it impossible to have any idea of the divine essence? God would evidently be the most unjust and the most unaccountable of tyrants if he should punish an Atheist for not knowing that which his nature made it impossible for him to know.

Religion and Philosophy.

Complete assent, so far from being a test of truth, is, on the contrary, almost always proof that truth has not been attained, owing either to erroneous assumptions as to the premises, or to the omission of important factors in the solution of the problem. To give an instance, I suppose there could not be a stronger case of complete assent than that of the inquisitors who condemned the theories of Galileo. They had in support of the proposition that the sun revolved round the earth the testimony of the senses, the universal belief of mankind in all ages, the direct statement of inspired scripture, the authority of the infallible church. Was all this to be set aside because some 'sophist vainly mad with dubious lore' told them, on grounds of some new-fangled so-called science, that the earth revolved round its axis and round the sun? "No; let us stamp out a heresy so contrary to our 'illative sense' and so fatal to all the most certain and cherished beliefs of the Christian world, to the inspiration of the word of God and to the authority of his church." 'E pur si mouve,' and yet the earth really did move; and the verdict of fact was that Galileo and science were right, and the church and the illative sense were wrong.—[Sci.]