

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

DEVOTED TO

SCIENCE, MORALS, FREE THOUGHT, FREE ENQUIRY AND THE DIFFUSION OF LIBERAL SENTMENTS.

"Come now and let us reason together;" Let us hear all sides; Let us divest ourselves of prejudice and the effects of early education; Let us "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good."

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INTRODUCTORY.

The publication of this little monthly is entered into that those holding liberal views upon religious and theological subjects, and those in favor of getting out of the deep ruts of bigotry, superstition and error, may have an additional organ through which to speak, and through the columns of which their opinions and sentiments may be made known to all who care to hear them.

A discussion recently sprung up in this town between some members of the clergy and our own friends, and when we wished to reply through our city papers to articles designed to silence us, we found it difficult to gain admittance to their columns, and have in some cases been flatly refused the opportunity of defending ourselves when attacked. The pulpit is against us, the press is against us, and unless we have a "mouth-piece" of our own, we can hardly see how we are to have an equal chance with our opponents. Common fairness should certainly admit our being heard as well as those who differ from us. It seems to us also there is ample room for a monthly visitant of this kind. There are hundreds of thousands—yes several millions in our fair country, who are more or less skeptical in their religious views, and we have but few organs through which to speak and be heard, and we see no reason why our modest effort should not be liberally sustained. We are willing to let our "light shine" and to do what in us lies to diffuse the sentiments which we believe tend to progress, advancement and the improvement of our fellow-beings.

We are not unaware we are taking a bold stand—one that but a few centuries ago would have cost us our lives, and one that even now may produce alienation of friends, and the censure of the bigoted and illiberal portions of the community. It is no small undertaking to oppose in a positive manner the religious superstitions of centuries, and to hold up in the clear sunlight of to-day the false theories and errors handed down to us from the dark ages of the past. The church is rich and powerful, with thousands of priests all over the land, under munificent pay, to maintain her claims and advance her interests, as well as to stifle and suppress every voice that may be raised to point out her false assumptions and every utterance that may be made in opposition to the chains she binds upon the too passive and easily duped people.

We are not vain enough to think we will be able to bring to bear greater ability in this labor than has heretofore been exercised by others, nor do we expect striking or immediate results from our efforts; but feeling no disinclination to aid with our feeble hands to help on the wheel of progress which we are happy to know is steadily and firmly moving through the world, we cheerfully add our little strength to the work, and will be happy to do what we can towards diffusing light and liberal sentiments.

Our columns will be open to all who feel disposed to favor us with communications and correspondence, whether they are with us or opposed to us; and the same are respectfully solicited. If members of the clergy or any of our Christian friends

wish to reply to any doctrines we may advocate or in support of such as they may believe to be true, our little paper shall be at their service so far as room will permit. We mean in all things to be fair as well as free.

The Truth Seeker, at all events, is in for a year's campaign, and we hope the intercourse with our readers may continue many years; and we ask the friends of truth, light and mental liberty to give us their aid, both by contributing to our columns and in helping us to get up a generous list of subscribers.

It must be apparent to every person that at the low price at which we furnish this paper that our profits are extremely small and that its publication is not entered into for the sole purpose of making money. We claim to be governed by higher motives and to be actuated by nobler impulses. At the low price at which we furnish it we place it within the reach of every individual. There is scarcely a person in the whole country who can not spare fifty cents for a liberal, fearless, outspoken paper for a whole year; and, while we trust every liberal-minded person under whose notice this sheet may fall will decide to subscribe for it at once, we hope also many members and friends of the church will also see fit to take it and see what we have to say. Let all be free and liberal enough to hear both sides, and not base their belief by hearing one side only.

Some 12,000 copies of this number will be issued and distributed over the country. We will be very glad if our circulation can soon double that number, and we can see no good reason why it should not. We trust every person who sees a copy of our paper and wishes to take it for a year will write to us at once, enclosing the small price we ask for it, that our lists may be made up in time and necessary arrangements made. We trust our friends in all parts of the country will take an interest in bringing The Truth Seeker to the notice of every liberal-minded person in their immediate locality and to all they think will be disposed to take it. If they have friends or acquaintances in other localities to whom they wish the paper sent, just subscribe for a copy for each and send us the name and locality and it shall be promptly forwarded. The amount is very small, and, in view of the amount of original and reading matter we furnish, we think there is not a cheaper periodical in America.

Our price is 50 cents per year; seven copies to one address for \$3, or twelve copies to one address for \$5, with two extra copies to every ten additional names—payable always in advance. Sums of two dollars or over should be sent in Postoffice order or by registered letter.

All communications to be addressed to THE TRUTH SEEKER, Paris, Ills.

To those who do not feel inclined to do more, and can give us the names of persons who they think will be likely to subscribe for our sheet, we will thank them to send their addresses to us that we may forward a copy for inspection.

Again we say to our friends, let The Truth Seeker be sustained—let it be successful in disseminating light and truth and in dispelling the fogs of superstition, bigotry and error.

OUR PLATFORM.

We extend the right hand of fellowship to liberal minds of all grades and classes. We ask them not to adopt our special views and opinions—to see with our eyes or to understand with our reason. We are not "hide-bound," nor do we ask others to "measure their wheat in our half-bushel." We embrace, as in one brotherhood, Liberals, Free Religionists, Rationalists, Spiritualists, Universalists, Unitarians, Friends, Infidels, Free Thinkers, and in short all who dare to think and judge for themselves. Let us compare our views; let us canvass each others' opinions and reasons, and see which has the better way. We have no creed or dogmas to ask others to subscribe to, but are in favor of independent thought, free enquiry, free speech, and everything that tends to break the chains of mental bondage, ignorance and superstition. We hope the majority of those to whom we send this number of our paper will not only approve of our objects and aims but send us their own names, and also the names of as many others as possible. Fifty cents is a small matter to any individual, but enough of them combined will enable us to keep alive and in a flourishing condition this fearless little sheet.

While the various sects and churches have some hundreds of weekly and monthly papers to represent their many creeds and doctrines, the liberal portions of the community have but few organs, and it seems to us that one so low in price as this should be liberally sustained. Send us in then your little remittances, and we will endeavor to give you the full worth of your money.

VIRTUE AND MORALITY.

How excellent is the practice of virtue and how commendable in every sense of the word is a life of morality. They are the sources, and the only sources we may say, whence are derived peace of mind, happiness and contentment. Their worth and excellence can hardly be too fervently impressed upon the minds of the rising generation as well as all ages and classes. If they were always viewed in the right light it would hardly be necessary to urge upon the young or upon any age the superiority of a good life over a bad one; for the practice of virtue brings its own reward, and its effects are immediate and the compensation in this life.

There is a vast difference of opinion as to what constitutes virtue and what is morality. Our Christian friends claim it consists in believing the dogmas of Christianity—all that is contained in the Bible, and that every word of it is direct from God himself—in joining a church; aiding in the support of the priesthood; in believing that God sent his only and well-beloved Son into the world to suffer and die that his wrath towards the helpless beings of his creation might be appeased and that a fraction of them might escape the terrible torments of a never ending hell.

These and a kindred set of equally absurd doctrines are believed in a part, at least, to constitute virtue, and the practice of it is enjoined more for the effects it will have in the life beyond the grave; in saving our souls from the hell aforesaid than

from the advantages and benefits to be reaped now and in this life.

We claim virtue to be a different article entirely, and that the greatest excellence mankind are capable of achieving is in doing all in their power to make their fellow creatures happy; in soothing the sorrows of the afflicted; aiding those in need; affording the means of employment to the body; education to the mind; in short, doing all the good possible and no harm either to themselves or to those around them. In this course of conduct we live happy lives here and if there is a better world beyond the grave, as our spiritualistic friends assure us there is, and which we really hope is true, we will be well prepared to enter into the joys that may abound there.

Our Christian friends tell us much about the superiority of faith over works, and that they are to be saved by the former and not by the latter—meaning that a belief in the dogmas of the church takes precedence over the works of benevolence, kindness and love—virtually holding that it makes but little difference what a person *does* so he *believes* all right. We, on the contrary, hold that acts of kindness, goodness and benevolence greatly outrank faith or belief, and that it really makes but little difference what a man *believes* so that he *does* what is right and just.

The church claims, and feign would monopolize, all the virtue in existence—holding that without it, and the dogmas that constitute its creed, virtue and morality would scarcely be known in the world, and that everything and everybody would inevitably go to the bad. Christians claim for the church all the morality, all the intelligence, all the liberty, free government, as well as all the science that has gained ground in the world for the last few hundred years. We hold to the opposite: That the church did all in its power for many centuries to retard and hold back the advance of science, education, mental liberty and free government; that the gains that have been made in these respects have really been in spite of the church, and are due to the liberal minds that have existed before us. Because the church has finally acquiesced in what she could no longer prevent, it is wholly unjust that she should now claim the parentage of it.

It is a consolation to know that acts of kindness and love produce the same happying results whether performed by those of much or little faith—by those who believe or disbelieve dogmas and creeds.

The possession and practice of virtue is usually denied by Christians to liberalists, skeptics and infidels, and it is customary to hold them up as embodiments of everything immoral and wicked. Our observation and experience, however, has been that in works of humanity, benevolence and usefulness, as well as in all that constitutes virtuous conduct the liberal minded fully equal those of more narrow views. The struggle for independence and free government in this country was incited quite as much by infidels as Christians. The abolition of slavery was advocated and urged by infidels before the church said much of anything about it, and when they gave utterance it was as much in favor of slavery as against it. In the cause of education and free schools infidels have stood in the front ranks. In the cause of temperance they have been fully up with their opponents. In all that really pertains to the welfare and elevation of the race they have been prompt and active workers, and though we do not wish to boast, we seek not to evade a just comparison between them and their maligners.

PRIESTCRAFT AND SCIENCE CONTRASTED.

It is estimated the world has had over three thousand systems of religion, representing almost as many different deities, and every conceivable shade of opinion and belief. Each system

of religion has had its priesthood to teach its peculiar creeds and to declare to the people the will of their gods. They assumed a knowledge in this respect superior to the masses, and kept them under a control and subjection that amounted to a tyranny, cruel and relentless. History gives us ample accounts of this. The exactions of the priesthood have been onerous and heavy. They have never been a producing class in any sense of the word, but have always lived and flourished upon the toils and labors of others. They have rejoiced in tithes and the "first fruits of the land," and the "choicest of the flocks" have been required of their dupes. The "fat of the land" has always been their's. Costly pagodas, temples, mosques, cathedrals and churches without number have been erected for their service and occupation. The most bloody and devastating wars the world has known have been instigated by them.

Priestcraft has been an incubus—a dead weight upon the human race. It has dwarfed the intellect; it has discouraged education and mental advancement; its aim has been to keep the human mind under its own control and direction; it has bound the chains of superstition, error and darkness upon the human mind; its power over men has been more potent and direful than kingcraft; it has been the most pernicious government the world has had to submit to; its influence has been degrading to the mind and subversive to mental freedom.

Not so with science. Though humble in its origin, and though discouraged, discountenanced and persecuted by priestcraft, its progress has been gradual, steady and sure. It has laid no exactions upon the people; it has abstracted nothing from the wealth of the world, but added immensely to it; it has not been cruel or bloodthirsty in its nature; it has incited no war or bloodshed; it has not dealt in empty chimeras, but has given the world substantial truth and knowledge; our institutions of learning are founded upon it, and the useful arts have sprung from its teachings; its influences are elevating and ennobling to the human mind, and it is the one great and good teacher upon which man may safely rely. Much as we have received from this source, more still remains in store for us. We have only to reach forth our hands, use the means within our reach and secure the blessings which science bestows on all who seek her.

The contrast between priestcraft and science could be more fully and ably shown, but enough has been said perhaps to indicate there is a wide difference. The one has been constantly taking from the labor and wealth of the world, while the other has been adding to it. One has been a heavy burden upon mankind, the other has given us facilities for overcoming the difficulties we meet in life. Which costs most? Which yields the most good?

How is it in our own country? There are said to be in the United States over sixty thousand churches and as many or more priests and preachers who are occupied in promulgating the various creeds and dogmas with which their churches abound. For such services liberal salaries (over \$60,000,000 per year) are paid. The cost of the churches, the salaries of the priesthood, and all the expenses connected therewith amounts to an immense sum. Do we receive benefits therefrom commensurate therewith? And right here we would submit it to our readers if the effort, talent and means used in all these churches in the interest of creeds, were used in teaching and diffusing to young and old the truths of science—astronomy, geology, chemistry, physiology, natural philosophy, and kindred studies, whether the country would not be absolutely the better for it. If every church was an institution of learning and every priest a teacher of science, every man and woman in the land might be well educated in its practical truths. Would such a state of things be desirable? Here is room for thought, and we will probably have more to say on the subject at some future time.

INCREASE OF SKEPTICISM.

It is a truth that cannot longer be concealed or kept in the back ground that skepticism, doubt, unbelief and infidelity has within the last few years been rapidly gaining ground, not only in the United States but in all parts of the civilized world. As the development and advancement of science opens our eyes to what is really true, the less confidence is felt in the traditions and errors of past ages, and the more natural it becomes for us to doubt and disbelieve Bible stories and narratives of the creation of the world, the fall of man, the deluge, together with all the accounts of miraculous occurrences and events opposed to the unchangeable laws by which affairs in this world are governed as well as what is known as "gospel history," together with the dogmas of the church. As light and truth break upon the world, the falsities, superstitions and errors of the dim past must give way, even as the darkness, fogs and mists of night are dispelled by the rays of the morning sun.

A writer in Scribner's Magazine for August, in an article on "Modern Skepticism" (the same subject to be continued in two following numbers), shows conclusively that skepticism and infidelity are gaining ground rapidly, and quotes unimpeachable authorities to sustain the position. We will notice some of them.

Says Froude: "At this moment a general doubt is coming up like a thunderstorm against the wind, and blackening the sky. Those who cling most tenaciously to the faith in which they were educated, yet confess themselves perplexed. They know what they believe, but why they should require others to believe it they cannot tell or cannot agree."

The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Winchester says: "Doubt is everywhere. Skeptical suggestions are wrapped up in narrative; they bristle in essays; they color our physical philosophy; they mingle themselves with our commonplace theology itself."

"In fact," says Froude again, "the truth of gospel history is now more widely doubted in Europe than at any time since the conversion of Constantine. Every thinking person who has been brought up a Christian and desires to remain a Christian, yet who knows anything of what is passing in the world, is looking to be told on what evidence the New Testament claims to be received. This state of opinion proves of itself that the arguments hitherto offered produce no conviction. Every miraculous history is discredited as legend, however exalted the authority on which it seems to be rested. We crave to have good reasons shown us for maintaining still the one great exception."

"Thus from day to day," Pressense says, "a form of skepticism is being developed which is in the very air we breathe. It finds its way in the lightest publications; the novel and the journal vie with each other in its diffusion; short review articles, skilled in giving grace and piquancy to erudition, furnish it with arguments which appear weighty."

Professor Fisher frankly says: "The comparative strength of the infidel party in our times is understood by but a few of Christian teachers. They are not awake to the subtle form which skepticism has assumed. They fail to see it is diffused like an atmosphere. They are not aware how widely the seeds of unbelief are scattered through books and journals which find a hospitable reception even in Christian families. And they do not appreciate the significance of the fact that so many leaders of opinion on matters outside of the sphere of religion, are adherents, more or less outspoken, of the skeptical schools."

In a recent address by that popular lecturer and independent thinker, B. F. Underwood, upon the Progress of Free Thought, he says: "The scientific minds of Germany have no respect for Christian theology. Its most learned and influential theo-

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gians even have abandoned all confidence in the miraculous portions of the Bible.

"England, too, is a country in which the Christian religion has lost much of its influence. The most prominent authors of that country either oppose or ignore the dogmas of Christianity. Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Buckley, Grote, Leche, Spencer, Stuart Mill and George Eliot, with hundreds of others, representing the brain and culture of the British nation, have given to the world works which are acknowledged by every orthodox Christian to be hostile to his faith."

Lord Salisbury, chairman of a recent meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, held in London, mournfully confessed "that the intense importance of the prevailing unbelief presses itself on the minds of thoughtful Christians, and acquires new weight every day. They were standing in one of the most awful crisis through which the intellect of Christendom had ever passed. They could point to many distinguished intellects from which all that belief had gone in which until now the highest minds had coincided."

Much other proof can be adduced were it necessary to show the rapid gains skepticism is making throughout the civilized world and the consequent lessening of the general confidence in the old traditions, superstitions and dogmas. This declension of the general faith is of course regarded by the church as an evil—a calamity almost to be mourned over; but by the friends of progress it is hailed as a sure indication of the ultimate triumph of light over darkness, truth over error, free thought and liberal principles over bigotry, superstition and priestcraft.

This movement is most noticeable and most prevalent with the learned, scientific and thinking classes. Nearly all the leading scientific minds of the day are skeptics. Men of general education in Europe and America are tending in this direction and this tendency is daily increasing. It is estimated that a large majority of the leading editors of the secular press are skeptics; that more than half the prominent lawyers of the country are of the same class; that a large proportion of the most eminent physicians are tending in the same direction, and even the clergy themselves, probably the last body in the world to embrace new ideas and new truths, are becoming materially tinctured with this same prevailing doubt. It is thought by good judges that one half of them do not believe the doctrines they teach. Though for obvious reasons it is necessary for them to still uphold and adhere to the old ideas and opinions of past ages, they are nevertheless susceptible to the spirit of the times. Many of them at this hour are seriously debating in their own minds the truths of the doctrines they teach, and are almost impelled to admit that they have been in error. More than one clergyman has acknowledged to the writer of this that they "were perplexed with doubt as to the real truths of theology, and at times hardly knew what to believe." And those members of the clergy in various parts of the country who have had the honesty, candor and independence to drop the incongruous and untenable opinions of olden times and embraced the truth as it is in nature, science and reason may now be numbered by the score.

But it is after all among the masses of intelligent and thinking minds that skepticism most fully prevails. Tens and hundreds of thousands of men and women of the present day have arrived at that state of mental independence to assume the right to throw off the trammels of superstition and bigotry, and to think for themselves. Large numbers of those who still maintain their connection with the church are positive skeptics, and doubt the fundamental doctrines to which they yield their tacit assent. Of course these classes do not all believe alike, nor have they all arrived at precisely the same conclusions. Some are more advanced than others. A part are radical and ultra, while others are more moderate. The influences and effects of prejudice and early education are not easily thrown off at

once, and it is only by time and honest conviction that it is accomplished; but all occupy the common ground that they have the perfect right to doubt and discard the incorrect notions of former years, and to embrace the teachings of science and truth. They exercise free thought, free opinions, and advocate free enquiry and free discussion, believing the real truth will benefit mankind vastly more than untenable creeds, borrowed originally from Paganism, revamped by the Jewish Theologist, and adopted and revised by the Fathers of the Christian Church.

We have the greatest confidence in the continued growth and development of mental freedom, love of truth and independence of priestly dictation until a majority at least of the enlightened masses are perfectly free to think for themselves and to doubt everything that possesses not the adequate proof to convince the reason of its truth and credibility.

True, hundreds of thousands are still in the dark, and are not yet masters of their own opinions. They are absolutely in "leading-strings," which are held and manipulated by an artful priesthood of the Christian Church—the most powerful and subtle organization ever known in the world. We are aware popular prejudices; bigotry, wealth, fashion, and church influence are opposed to the spread of free thought, but science, truth and right must ultimately prevail over the errors and false creeds of the past, until the sun of truth, even as the sun of our solar system, shall illuminate the whole earth.

We may sometimes think this progress is slow and that the world is still full of superstition and mental bondage, but let us look back for a few centuries and we can see vast gains have been made. It is less than a thousand years since the armies of the Crusades were organized by the Christian nations and the Christian Church avowedly for the purpose of reclaiming Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the possession of Mahometans, as well as to destroy the Moors of Spain and the Albigenses and Waldenses of France and adjacent countries. By these Christian wars hundreds of thousands—yes millions of human beings were slaughtered, and literally "oceans of blood" were shed. Nothing like liberal views or heretical notions were allowed to exist.

About this time, or soon after, the "Holy Inquisition" was established—a spiritual court in the Christian Church for the trial of heretics and spiritual offenders. It was set up in the Twelfth Century, and its rigors, cruelties and inhuman outrages were continued in several Christian countries for five or six hundred years. Its unfortunate victims were seized at all hours of the day and night and dragged unceremoniously before this tribunal, without knowing their accusers or, many times, the offenses with which they were charged; and, without the right of defense, they were condemned to the most horrible and excruciating deaths. Among the infernal inventions were "racks," upon which the hapless victims were secured and stretched until their joints were literally torn asunder; *wheels*, upon which the bodies were bound and their bones broken and their flesh mangled in the most shocking manner; *thumb-screws*, *pincers*, *burning splinters of pitch pine inserted into the flesh*, *boiling oil*, *faggots*, *fire and the stake*, were some of the horrible means invented by which to produce relentless torture and cause the most agonizing death. Nameless thousands and hundred of thousands of poor victims were thus cruelly tortured and murdered by this abominable engine of the church, and all in the name of religion and Christianity, and for exercising the God-given right of thinking for themselves and doubting the justice of the authority of a cruel and vindictive priesthood. When we realize this state of things, we can see vast improvements have taken place.

It is not three hundred and fifty years since Galileo, one of the greatest philosophers that ever lived, whose discoveries took in a wide range—the pendu-

lum; the thermometer; specific gravity; the telescope, and with this instrument the composition of the milky way, the moons of Jupiter and Saturn, the phases of Venus, the spots on the sun, &c.—was seized by the officers of the same Holy Inquisition for teaching that the sun was the centre of the solar system, that the earth revolved upon its axis every twenty-four hours and moved round the sun in three hundred and sixty-five days, and by a series of cruel tortures, horrible beyond belief, was forced to deny the truths of the science he had taught and compelled to sign a written document to that effect. Upon being released, however, he still exultantly asserted of the world "that it still moves." The confinement and sufferings he had passed through, however, completely broke him down in body and spirit, and he soon died (in 1642), one of the noblest and brightest martyrs of science the world has ever known.

It is but three hundred and twenty years since John Calvin, one of the leaders of the Reformation, and one of the principal fathers and founders of the Protestant Church, caused Michael Servetus, a physician of ability, after prolonged persecution, trials and imprisonment, to be burned to death by a slow fire at Geneva, Switzerland, for simply advocating the doctrine of unitarianism in opposition to the trinitarianism of orthodoxy. Thus we can see what it cost at that time to exercise the liberty of opinion.

It is but about two hundred years since in our own country the same kind of intolerance and cruelty was exhibited by the same Christian Church. Even in enlightened New England heretical views and freedom of opinion was not tolerated at all. Quakers were hung in Boston for their belief. Many hapless men and women, supposed to be bewitched, were cruelly put to death. Baptists even were expelled from the state of Massachusetts for opinion's sake, and all persons prohibited from living within its bounds unless they were sound in the faith of orthodoxy. But it is better now. The priests have not the same power and rule they had then; and the people are at least in possession of some of their natural rights.

Thousands of us who are alive now can see a great improvement within our own recollection. Liberal views and freedom of opinion have gained ground immensely within forty or fifty years. Those who can remember that far back can attest to the great changes and modifications made. Then *total depravity*, *predestination* and *fore-ordination*, *sulphur*, *brimstone*, *the devil* and *hell-fire* were the principal stock in trade of the clergy, and these were hurled at the heads of hapless sinners from every pulpit. It is different now. These exploded ideas are almost entirely dropped, except by a few old-fashioned Christians. They are now preached but little, and are hardly recognized tenets of the present theology. Then for a man to take the liberty of differing from the orthodox church and to be a skeptic or an infidel was extremely unpopular. He was shunned, tabooed and spurned as a moral monster. A publication like this would not have been tolerated at all. Matters in this line are certainly improving; though in some communities skeptics and infidels are still viewed with suspicion and are not awarded the full meed of respect to which their honest convictions and independence entitle them. It will not always be so. In the next quarter of a century, at the rate of progress now made, an honest skeptic or infidel will be just as much respected and stand as high in the estimation of his fellow-men as any other class, and they will not likely be outnumbered by the believers in other doctrines. The indications of the progress of free thought are most favorable, and we truly have much to cheer and encourage us.

SUCH editors of papers as receive this number of THE TRUTH SEEKER and will give it a friendly notice, giving terms, &c., will, upon sending us a copy of their paper containing the same, be entitled to THE TRUTH SEEKER for the term of one year.

WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE REQUIRED TO BELIEVE.

That God existed millions upon millions of ages, but without occupation until about six thousand years ago, when He made this world and the countless other worlds that revolve in space; that the earth was created before the sun; that there was light, morning and evening, before the sun was made; that it required five days for the Lord to make this small world, together with the animals and plants upon it, but that one day was sufficient in which to make the sun, moon and innumerable stars, which are themselves suns and worlds, many of them millions of times larger than this globe; that man was made of the dust, and woman of one of his ribs; that God placed the pair, with the infirmities He had created them with, in the Garden of Eden, in the center of which stood an apple tree of His own planting, the fruit of which He knew would inevitably doom man and his posterity forever to interminable and unutterable woe; that the serpent, which was also a creation of God, and pronounced good, held conversation with Eve and seduced her to eat of the apples and to give of the same to Adam, by which act they and the world after them were hopelessly ruined; that God regretted that He had made man, and to destroy him from the face of the earth, sent a great flood of water to cover the whole world to the tops of the highest mountains, some five miles in depth, (though we are not told where this immense body of water could possibly come from, nor where it could go to when assuaged); that Noah and his wife, with his three sons and their wives, together with two each of every unclean animal and fowl and seven each of every clean animal and fowl of every variety and species upon the face of the earth, were gathered together and voluntarily entered the ark, of moderate dimensions, and where, though of all possible contrariety of tastes, habits and dispositions, and feeding upon all possible kinds of food, they, with sustenance sufficient to keep them, lived together for the space of one year in the ark, with a single window or door, the same kept closed and the ark coated with pitch within and without; that notwithstanding all this the inhabitants of the earth soon became as wicked as before; that God made a contract with Abraham that his offspring should be His chosen people forever, in preference to any other portions of the human race, though the same were equally as much the children of His own creation as the offspring of Abraham; that He appointed Moses to be a ruler and law-giver over them, commanding the sacrificing to Himself for His own pleasure and gratification, immense numbers of bullocks, rams, he-goats, &c.; that He commanded many nations to be utterly exterminated, including women and children; that God alternately loved and abhorred His chosen people, and blessed and cursed them by turns, sometimes giving them the property that belonged to others, and sometimes slaying at one time 50,000 or 70,000 of His children for some trivial offense an individual had committed; that He was changeable, fickle, vindictive, revengeful, malicious and cruel; that He took pleasure in wars, battles and bloodshed, and frequently ordered His people on to wholesale slaughter and destruction; that on one of these occasions, Joshua, a common mortal like ourselves, stopped the sun and moon in their course and caused that day to be several hours longer than any other day before it or since, and for the purpose that a greater number of human beings might be slaughtered, and that a still greater amount of human blood might be spilled; that the witch of Endor raised Samuel from the dead and enabled Saul to converse with him; that David was the man after God's own heart, though one of the greatest brigands, despoilers and robbers the world has ever known; that Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived, though one of the greatest libertines of which we have any account, having 700 wives and 300 concubines; that Sampson had sufficient muscular strength

to overthrow a temple and tear open the jaws of a lion, and that this great strength lay entirely in his hair; that according to Elijah's prediction no rain or dew fell upon the earth for three years and six months; that he sojourned with a widow woman and increased her stores of oil and meal, and that he restored her son to life after death had absolutely taken place, and that finally he was taken up bodily into heaven by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire, and never saw death, though it is utterly impossible for a human being to exist for a minute in the higher regions even could they be transported thither; that Elisha caused an ax of iron which had sunk to the bottom of the river to float and swim upon the surface; that he sent two she bears out of the woods and destroyed forty-two children because they had said to him "go up thou bald-head;" that Jonah was swallowed by a large fish, in the belly of which he remained three days when he was thrown up upon dry land as good as ever; that Daniel was cast into a den of lions and that they did not touch him or do him the slightest harm; that the three jews, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, were bound and thrown into a fiery furnace made seven times hotter than usual, and not a hair of their heads was injured nor a thread of their garments burned, though the strong men who bound them and cast them into the furnace were utterly destroyed by the heat; that King Nebuchadnezzar in the space of one hour was driven from his throne and kingdom, from the habitations of men into the field with beasts and cattle, where he fed upon grass like an ox; this continuing for "seven times." Exactly how long this was we do not know, but it was until his hair had become like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws, after which his kingdom was again restored to him.

That Jesus Christ was the son of God, and equal in age and power to God himself, and born of a mortal woman but without a natural father; that He performed marvelous works and miracles, setting aside the laws of nature which had been established for the government of the universe; that to appease Divine justice and anger He was cruelly put to death on the cross by God's own chosen people; that at the time of the crucifixion the earth was rent asunder, the graves opened and the dead in them restored to life, that they walked out of their graves and mingled with their former associates; that after three days the Son of God arose from the dead and for forty days remained with His disciples, when He was taken bodily up into heaven.

They are required to believe that God having made man with all the appetites, passions and frailties he possesses, and for acting just as his nature impels him is doomed to the flames of an endless and ever-burning hell, and though He has sent His own beloved and innocent son into the world to be ignominiously put to death to thereby appease His anger and satisfy His justice, still but a small portion of the human family can be saved, but are doomed by their Creator and Father to suffer for countless ages and forever ceaseless and most excruciating torments. They must believe that one is three and three is one, and both the same; that the Father and Son are of the same age and equal in every respect; that bread and wine are really, by the action of priests, converted into the body and blood of Christ; that the bodies of thousands of millions of people who have lived upon the earth will at the last day be raised, though the same gases and particles of matter must have entered into the bodies of thousands of different persons.

All these and many more equally absurd dogmas and stories must be implicitly believed or we must be damned.

Now seriously, is it not most wonderful how a sensible, intelligent, rational being can subscribe to all these and other similar absurdities? And having gone so far would it seem very singular should they go a little farther and swallow as true the stories of the Arabian Nights, the tales of Maunchausen, and Gulliver's Travels?

This, however, is the basis of christianity, and this we are required to believe or suffer the penalty of endless punishment. But we beg to be excused. It is impossible for us to give our assent to doctrines so absurd. We believe God is merciful, just, loving and kind to all His creatures, and we are willing to trust our destinies with Him rather than to give our adhesion and credence to the absurdities above named.

INFIDELS VERSUS CHRISTIANS.

There is nothing more common than for infidels and liberalists to be held up by the clergy and members of the church as the vilest of the vile, and to be denounced in unmeasured terms as bad and dangerous men. This, to say the least, is extremely unjust. It is quite possible some infidels may have been unworthy men, but so far as our observation has extended, we have found them to be good moral citizens, well and peaceably disposed, honest in their dealings, upright in their intercourse with their fellow men, and as freely disposed to open their purse to the call of the needy as any other class of men.

Many of the first minds and best men of our country were infidels. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington (so claimed by Jefferson,) John Adams Ethan Allen, Thomas Paine, and many others of the cotemporaries of their times, belonged to this class. In our own times we will mention the name of the great and good Lincoln, whose heart was singularly ingenuous and free from guile—the emancipator of 4,000,000 slaves and the author of the noble sentiment, "charity for all and malice towards none;" he was an infidel. In the same category may be ranked Humbolt, Combe, Darwin, Huxley, Buckle, Froude, Tyndall, Grote, Weiss, Lechey, Spencer, Stuart Mill, Bismarck, Liebig, Bradlaugh, Garrison, Phillips, Emerson, Kneeland, Parker, Sumner, Conway, and a host of other brilliant minds in the walks of science, statesmanship, letters and theology. These men are distinguished not only for their science and education, but for the morality and purity of their lives. To say the least they will compare favorably with the clergy of the day, who seem to be quite as full of infirmities and infallibilities as any class of men we have. A friend of ours has kept an account of the members of the clergy who, within the last twenty years, have been arraigned before the courts of the country and their own churches for crimes and misdemeanors, and that number has already reached over fifteen hundred. And more than half their peccadillos are never brought to the light, but are "hushed up" for the good of the cause and to save disgrace to the church.

It was recently admitted by a divine in this vicinity that the clergy was as well represented in our penitentiaries and State's prisons, in proportion to their numbers as any class of the community, while it is seldom that an infidel is found there. It is reported that in the State Prison at Auburn, New York, there are twenty members of the clergy confined for the crimes they committed. Are these indeed not a pretty class of men to cry out against the immorality of infidels?

Our little sheet will doubtless be attacked by them and be denounced in strong language; but we will say to the gentlemen if we are in error and our cause is as weak as they represent, they have no occasion to fear what we can do. If they are right and we are wrong they certainly ought to easily be able to show it, and we offer them the use of our columns where they can speak in a fair and honorable way. We would ask them not to "stab us in the back" when our attention is called in another direction, nor to attack us from the pulpit in our absence or where we would not be permitted to reply were we present. There is an honorable warfare and a dishonorable one; we prefer the former.

LIBERAL PERIODICALS.

It is a source of gratification to progressive minds that in our land and time so many able and outspoken organs of free thought are sustained by the people. They are doing an incalculable amount of good in breaking the crust of superstition and error with which the world has been so long enveloped. They are giving the masses objects to think upon and are opening their eyes to the follies and errors of old creeds. They are leading the popular mind out of the mists and fogs of ignorance on to the elevated ground of truth, where the sun of science, reason and utility is no longer obscured.

Among the journals of this class we will mention *The Boston Investigator*, a candid, fearless and consistent advocate of what it conceives to be vital truth, and intimately connected with the interests of humanity and the affairs of the present life. It is forty-two years of age, and has nobly withstood the shafts of malice, bigotry and sectarian intolerance for more than a generation. Long may it live and flourish. See advertisement on eighth page.

The Index is an able organ of cultured Free Thought, devoted to free and rational religion. It gives utterance to the boldest and most matured thought of the age upon all religious questions, and applies it directly to the social and political amelioration of society. See advertisement on last page.

The Golden Age—Published by Theodore Tilton, and is conducted with distinguished ability in the interest of liberal thought. It is unique and original in appearance; abounds in brief and spicy paragraphs, and is greatly quoted by the entire press of the country.

Prominent among the liberal and progressive organs of the day are the publications of our Spiritualistic friends. They occupy a field peculiarly their own, and advocate a philosophy which is beautiful in character and which we ardently hope is true. At the same time they are zealous workers in the cause of humanity, Free Thought and advanced liberal views.

The Banner of Light, the oldest paper of the kind in the country, and an able exponent of the spiritual philosophy of the nineteenth century, well deserves the liberal patronage it receives. See advertisement.

The Religio-Philosophical Journal, published by S. S. Jones, of Chicago, is an able and enterprising sheet, gotten up in excellent style, conducted with marked ability, and highly prized by its numerous readers, containing as it does much very readable matter upon the subject of spiritualism and advanced liberal thought. It is doing a great amount of good, and should be read by every liberal-minded person. See advertisement.

Our Age, published by Lois Waisbrooker, of Battle Creek, Michigan, a comparatively new candidate for popular favor, is a weekly journal, devoted to the interests of Spiritualism in the broad sense of that term, and does not admit there are side issues. It is conducted with ability and independence, and is worthy of a liberal support. See advertisement.

Britain's Quarterly must not be omitted. It is an excellent work, full of truth, reason and sound philosophy. It has but to be read to be appreciated.

Each of these journals has marked out a course peculiarly its own, though, so far as the cause of truth and humanity is concerned, working in unison and harmony. They are all free, independent and outspoken, and greatly in advance of the organs of a superannuated Theology. They are a band of generous and noble workers in the cause of truth and right, and it is with pride we join our humble efforts with these laudable undertakings. There is no need of jealousy between us, there is room enough for all. The labor to be performed is immense; the field is truly ample; "the harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few." Though we may not agree upon all points, we occupy the same common ground of free thought and mental liberty.

Here let us cordially meet and amicably co-operate in the good cause. Let us say or do nothing to repel each other, but accord to each the rights we claim for ourselves.

It is due from the radical, liberal, independent minds of the country to support the above publications. The numbers in the United States belonging to this class is great—amounting at least to ten millions of people, and each one of the number should be a constant reader of two or more of the above journals. We are pleased to know they are liberally patronized, and we wish to see their influence still more widely extended, and while we are glad to see our co-laborers flourish and increase, we are selfish enough to feel still a little more anxious about ourselves. Our pretensions are moderate, and our price so insignificant that we hope to have a long subscription list. We trust, however, no person will drop either of the above papers in consequence of subscribing for *THE TRUTH SEEKER*. We are in sense a rival to either, but propose merely to be an auxiliary in the cause of human progress. Give us a helping hand.

THIS number of *THE TRUTH SEEKER* will be sent for examination to many who are not subscribers, but who we earnestly hope will become so. The carrying to a successful result the publication of a paper of this kind is an enterprise of no small magnitude, and requires the aid of friends in all parts of the country. This aid can be rendered in various ways:

1. By subscribing promptly to *THE TRUTH SEEKER*.

2. By subscribing for additional copies to be sent to friends and acquaintances in other localities. As we furnish twelve copies for a year for \$5, it will take that moderate sum only to ensure the circulation of a "round dozen" of this fearless exponent of liberalism. May we not hope that many friends of Free Thought will be induced to do this?

3. By calling the attention of every liberal-minded person within convenient reach to these pages and influencing them to add their names to our subscription list.

4. By sending us the names and address of all persons of their acquaintance, and in whatever localities, who will be likely to appreciate a periodical of this character, that we may send them a specimen number for examination.

We respectfully request our friends everywhere to extend us their aid in the manner and order indicated.

WE will be glad to have an active agent in every city and town in the country—one who will make a point of calling the attention of all liberal-minded persons in the immediate vicinity to *THE TRUTH SEEKER*, with a view to their subscribing for the same. To those who will act in this capacity and will write to us, giving us suitable references, we will send them a certificate of agency and allow them a commission of twenty per cent. upon the regular subscription price. This will be dividing the profits as closely as possible, allowing us but a narrow margin of profit. May we not hope that in every city, town and community at least one friend of humanity will be willing to use a little extra effort in the cause of truth.

WE WOULD suggest to our subscribers the propriety of preserving the numbers of *THE TRUTH SEEKER* and at the close of the volume to have them bound. If not convenient to send to other parties for this purpose, we will undertake to bind them for our subscribers at a moderate price. The volume will be of convenient size, and we trust valuable and convenient for reference as well as general perusal.

WE wished to get this number out by the first of the month but unavoidable delays prevented. We will endeavor usually to be on time.

DEMANDS OF LIBERALISM.

The following nine propositions issued by Francis E. Abbot, of *The Index*, were proposed most cordially, and they are approved by liberal minds all over the country:

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical property shall no longer be exempt from taxation.
2. We demand that the employment of chaplains in congress, in state legislatures, in the army and navy, and in prisons, asylums, and all other institutions supported by public money, shall be discontinued.
3. We demand that all public appropriations for sectarian, educational and charitable institutions shall cease.
4. We demand that all religious services now sustained by the government be abolished; and especially that the use of the Bible in public schools, whether ostensibly as a text-book or avowedly as a book of religious worship, shall be prohibited.
5. We demand the appointment, by the President of the United States or by the governors of the various states, of all religious festivals or fasts shall wholly cease.
6. We demand that the judicial oath in the courts and all other departments of the government shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation, under the pains and penalties of perjury, shall be established in its stead.
7. We demand that all laws directly or indirectly enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath shall be repealed.
8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights and impartial liberty.
9. We demand that not only in the constitution of the United States and of the several states, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privilege or advantage shall be conceded to Christianity or any other special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis, and whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly and promptly made.

DISCUSSION UPON THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER, &c.

It has been requested that we give place to the following discussion between two of our friends and the same number of our Paris clergymen, which was published in one of our city papers—*The Gazette*—within the last four months. Our space will not admit but a portion of it in this number, and it will be continued in two following numbers:

To the Clergy.

REVEREND SIRS: We infer, from your numerous Biblical quotations and statements made at the Methodist church last Sunday evening, that your conclusions are: *God hears and answers prayer*; and that if he does not, the Bible is false, your preaching is vain, and your temples of worship are worse than useless.

Now, we would suggest that you would prove the efficacy of prayer by accepting the challenge of that philosopher, Prof. Tyndall, who, with many others, desires to test the efficacy of prayer by having a hospital, or single ward of a hospital, which shall receive the special prayers of the Christian public for not less than three years, and if it shall be found at the end of that time that the rates of mortality are less, and the average numbers of recoveries are greater than in hospitals or wards for which no special intercession has been made, the efficacy of prayer will be at least presumptively established.

Prof. Tyndall is a practical common-sense man who grasps intricate problems with grace and ease, and whose suggestions are worthy of consideration. He desires to test the efficacy of prayer by a practical demonstration in some hospital where those who are suffering from all the maladies flesh is heir to—from the colic to a settled case of consumption.

Two hospitals of the same character of disease are standing side by side. Let one throw "physic to the dogs," dispense with portus plasters, anodynes, cordials, blisters, bleeding, expectorants, etc., and rely on the efficacy of prayer. Let the other adopt the most skilful means of treatment of modern times, and by this means forever settle one of the most vexed questions that ever puzzled the minds of men.

God does, or does not, answer prayer. If he condescends to mitigate the sufferings of humanity, the hospital where the poor are congregated, suffering from the excruciating pangs of disease, would be a suitable place for him to manifest his power.

By reading the Bible we find "Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed Abimelech." (Gen. xx. 17.) "When Moses prayed unto the Lord the fire was quenched." (Numbers xi. 2.) "Peter cured the blind by prayer" (Acts 9th chapter), etc., and Proverbs (xv. 29) affirms that the "Lord heareth the prayer of the righteous." Also in St. Mark (xi. 24) we read, "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Now, then, if you have the blessed assurance that your prayers will be heard, why not accept the challenge, and, if you win, then away with Dr. Walker's vinegar bitters, Helmbold's buchu, John Bull's sarsaparilla, Old Mother Winslow's soothing syrup, and last, but not least, Dr. Green's all-sticking balsam! Away with M.D.'s and their institutes of learning. Give room to the "man of prayer," for it is he who hath the balm of Gilead and can heal our wounds. But if you do not succeed in relieving the suffering by prayer, then what? Vice versa. But hold! reverend sirs: before you proceed would it not be well to let the voice of reason whisper to you a moment, asking you to crack the following theological nut:

Does not the Being that made the world govern it by laws that are inflexible, because they are the best?

If this Being did change his established laws to please an individual, a community, the inhabitants of this world, or the countless millions of worlds, would he not be a changeable Being? And if he governs the world by special and local exercise of his almightiness, and has the power to effect all things, other than through the course of natural law, why does he not displace sin with good, slavery with justice, poverty with plenty? Why does the Deity permit famine, disease and woe?

But, on the other hand, if God does not govern the world by special and local exercise of his almightiness, but by laws which are eternal and unchangeable, what good will your prayers do?

Would it not be far better if you would learn what God's fixed laws are by studying physiology, philosophy, science, etc., and then teach your intelligent audiences what those laws are, admonishing them to obey those laws if they would be happy, either here or "over the shining river?"

A LIBERAL THINKER.

Reply of Rev. R. D. Van Deursen, Pastor of the Paris Presbyterian Church.

DEAR SIR: Your inference from our "Biblical quotations and statements" is a correct one—God does hear and answer prayer, and if not then the Bible is false. And we infer from your Biblical quotations and statements that you believe that "the Being that made the world governs it by laws that are inflexible because they are the best;" "by laws that are eternal and unchangeable," and, therefore, you ask, "what good will your prayers do?" From this stand-point you suggest that we prove the efficacy of prayer by accepting the challenge of Prof. Tyndall, who desires, as you say, to test it, by the separation of a hospital into wards which shall or shall not receive the special prayers of the Christian public, and thus presumptively establish the fact.

In reply to the suggestion, I will state that the challenge has been accepted, and the Christian world are prepared to furnish the facts. You supply the proof of the efficacy of prayer in your own article. You quote the solemn assertion of Moses that "Abraham prayed unto God and God healed Abimelech." Is Moses a trustworthy witness or not? Luke, a physician of some note in his day, says, in writing the Acts of the Apostles that "Peter cured the blind by prayer." His testimony is surely as good and as worthy of credence as would be the sworn statement of "A Liberal Thinker" of our day to facts which he should witness in the Edgar County Almshouse if he should sign it and publish it in the *Gazette*. Moses and Luke tell us of facts, and we believe them. God answers the challenge before it was made. But you suggest in spite of this that we prove it to you. If you will not believe Moses, nor Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Ezekiel, nor Isaiah, nor Luke, nor John, nor Paul, when they not only declare that God answers prayer, but give us facts in proof of it, we may infer that you would not be satisfied if your hospital suggestion would be carried out now in our county. Well, bring on your hospital; the first thing to be done is to get men to consent to lie down in that prayerless ward. When you have done that, then secure the pledge of the entire race—that no petition shall go up to God for them, (for the test will not be an honest one if, while we cease praying here in Edgar county, there are millions of Christians praying for all the sick,) and then at the end of three years gather in your certificates from all the world, stating that no prayer has been offered during all that time by any

individual for any in the prayerless ward, and then compare the facts, and if they are against us then we will agree to take down our churches and give up our praying. And if you say the thing is an impossibility, we ask why do you suggest that we do things which you know are impossibilities?

But you say if God heals the sick in answer to prayer then "throw physic to the dogs." Are you not willing that God shall answer prayer for the sick by intermediate use of means? No Christian man ever presumed to dictate to God how he should accomplish his purposes and answer his prayer, and therefore your logic is at fault if you argue that because God hears prayer we must "away with our M. D.'s and their institutes of learning." We do not neglect our plowing and cultivation of our wheat fields because we have been taught to pray for our daily bread, but use the means and pray for God's blessing upon them.

Mr. Talmadge says truly: "If God made us (and I think he did), and if the Bible is true (and I am rather disposed to think it is), then it is not strange that prayer does traverse natural cause, aye, that it introduces a new cause. When God made the law he did not make it so strong that he could not break it. If God made our bodies, when they are broken he is the one to mend them; and it is reasonable that we should call him in to do it. If my furnace in the cellar breaks down, there is no one so competent to repair it as the manufacturer. If the body is disordered, call in the maker of it. God did not make the law and then run away from it. What is a law of nature? It is God's usual way of doing things. But He has said that if His children ask Him to do a thing, and He can consistently do it, He will do it. Go on with your pills and plasters and nostrums and elixirs and your catholicon, but remember that the mightiest agent in your recovery is prayer."

But if you say this is all imagination, the church rises with her millions of witnesses, and there are hundreds of them here in Edgar county, who will tell you they have tested the power of prayer in the sick-room and proved its efficacy. Bring our own Christian physicians to the witness-stand and ask them if they can tell you of facts which prove it. The fact that such men as Tenbrook and Todd and Woolley and Miller and Hays are to-day members of the Christian church proves this, if nothing else, that they have tested prayer and believe it. And if the testimony of Prof. Tyndall is so very valuable and desirable, is not the testimony of such men as Newton and Pascal and Luther and Erasmus and Wesley and Knox and Calvin and Havelock and Washington and many of the most learned and gifted of the race worth something? You ask again "Why does the Deity permit famine, disease and woe?" I am not presumptuous enough to say why God permits anything, except because it pleases Him. But you inquire also: "Would it not be far better for us to learn what God's fixed laws are by studying physiology, philosophy, science," etc. I answer that it is far better to study all of God's laws than to study a part, and, best of all, to study his moral laws which are given us in the Bible and admonish our hearers not only to obey physical law but moral law, if they would be happy here and "over the shining river," for I beg you to notice that your law of present physical life, and your physiology and philosophy and science does not even so much as tell you there is anything "over the shining river." You get that from the Bible, which you do not profess to believe. Our Bible clearly reveals the life that is to come. Your science does not reveal anything beyond this life. We are not simply teachers of physiology, etc., but our mission is to preach the gospel which our Bibles contain, and its precious promises both concerning the life that now is and that which is to come, and among them that blessed one which the Bible so clearly reveals, and which the experience of every praying man has proved, "Ask and ye shall receive," and thousands like it, to lead the soul to pray to God, who is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

And I now suggest that you have the manliness to write hereafter over your own honest name, and do not sneak behind an anonymous signature. Gentlemen who ask honest questions will always receive courteous treatment "from the clergy," and no sincere seeker after truth need be ashamed of himself or afraid to confess it.

R. D. VAN DEURSEN.

Reply to Rev. Van Deursen.

You say that Prof. Tyndall's challenge has been accepted, and the Christian world are prepared to furnish the facts. Let us have them.

Moses and the parties you referred to did not use any intermediate use of means. They did not carry a medicine chest; did they? Now the doctors ad-

minister the medicine to their patients, relying upon the efficacy of medicine and not prayer. What would the physicians think if some professor of medicine would give the following prescription:

R. Comp. syr. stil. sylv. oz. iv.
Iod. potasso dr. ss.
M.

"Before giving the above, kneel down by the patient's side and make a regular speech to the Almighty; telling him how good He is; how powerful a being He is; what a merciful and fine fellow He is generally; that you are the chief of sinners, a crawling worm of the dust; that your patient is very sick, and that you would like for him to change his law and cure your patient, if he is not "foreordained" to die now. After which, give of the above one dram three times a day."

Do you suppose the well-read doctors you referred to would have any faith in the above prescription in this enlightened day? Supposing that one of your arteries was ruptured; that there was not a moment to be lost in the application of proper remedies to stop the flowing of your life's blood, what would you think of the physician who, being called to your bedside, would drop upon his knees and offer up a loud and long prayer to the Almighty for to stop the flow of your blood? Methinks you would demand the efficacy of bandages, etc., and not of prayer. Have you any evidence to show that the praying physician has better success in the treatment of disease than the nonpraying physician? If not, your argument is only a dodge, a convenient dodge, nothing more. The older the world gets the more incredulous it becomes on the subject. Four little children were playing by a creek near Buffalo. One of them, a girl, fell in, but was rescued by a dog in plenty of time to be restored to life by proper remedies. Instead of taking her to a house near by, her playmates organized a prayer-meeting over the body, and put up devout petitions for instantaneous recovery. They prayed earnestly. They clasped their little hands, closed their eyes, glistening with child-like innocence and love, bowed down their knees in holy reverence and with their petitions moistened with tears they prayed! What beautiful supplications—so child-like, and, withal, beaming with innocence and love! They entreated God to bring her back instantaneously to life. They could see no reason why their Father in heaven, animated with tender regard and parental love, should not resuscitate their drowned companion. Yet, instead of administering the proper remedies for her recovery, they foolishly prayed, as you would have us believe the doctors do. But they soon found, however, that they might as well pray for a pickled sardine to be restored to life as the one lying before them. Had they at once made the alarm and given an opportunity for the proper remedies to be administered, the probability is that the unfortunate girl's life would have been saved. Prayer will not answer as a cathartic, expectorant, etc., nor will it restore the drowned to life.

You say that "when God made the law he did not make it so strong that he could not break it." Very well, then; if he loves good and has the power to prevent evil, why, then, I ask again, so much famine, disease and woe? You don't know why, "except that it pleases him." Oh horror! What kind of a God do you worship?

Look at that pale, feeble woman. How careworn her features; what a solemn sadness illumines her countenance, and the tear glistens in her eye. Her heart is a tomb of buried sorrows—a sepulchre where she has shut up untold effects of all her misfortunes; as a wife and mother she contends with a drunken husband; suffers unspeakable agonies. She asks God to help her, she receives no help, which you admit he can give. Calmly, with a soul racked with social storms, she kills herself and child. What a scene? when there was a power to prevent it. Does he answer prayer? Does he break his law, thereby making himself an imperfect and changeable Being? Ask the woman on bended knees in the garret praying for a crust of bread, and who dies of starvation! You kneel down and pray for God to protect you. You say you believe that God hears you, yet, I notice, that while you pray to God, "who controls all things," you have several lightning rods on your church—His hosue(?) Oh consistency thou art a jewel. "No Christian man ever presumes to dictate to God how he should accomplish his purposes and answer his prayer." Let us see: "Oh Lord come down in our midst to-day. Come right now. Oh we pray Thee that thou wouldst prosper the cause and bring sinners to Christ." You don't dictate, do you?

"Physiology and science do not so much as tell us that there is anything 'over the shining river.'" You are mistaken. If science is the essence of

facts and proves anything, it proves beyond a doubt that man still lives beyond the grave. Indeed, did I have to depend upon the Bible alone for my belief in the future world my faith would be weak after reading "So he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." (Job vii. 9.)

"Neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." (Eccl. ix. 5, 6.)

"They shall go down to the bars of the pit when our rest together is in the dust" (Job xvii. 13-16), and other passages of similar character.

"The Bible which you do not profess to believe!" I do not believe that everything in the Bible is true, nor do I think that you do. Do you believe a son can be two years older than his father? (See latter part of the 21st chapter and forepart of 22d chapter of 2d Chron.) I saw the statement that the American Bible Society has said that there are 150,000 mistakes in our English version of the Bible. Do you accept these errors?

You say you should admonish your readers to not only obey physical law but moral law. Does the following sound familiar? "Morality is no better than wickedness, and will save a soul no more than blasphemy can." If this is orthodox, then should we longer wonder that seven-eighths of the convicts in our penitentiaries are orthodox in their belief. Would not this belief that wickedness is as good as morality; virtue no better than vice, dishonesty as good as honesty, etc., naturally lead to the commission of those very crimes of which they were convicted?

I think there is very little science or physiology taught from the pulpit. "Gentlemen who ask honest questions will always receive courteous treatment from the clergy." My past experience has proven to the contrary; but, however, the future will tell as to yourself.

"My name." Why do you wish to know? What difference does it make to you whether my mother ever gave me a name, unless you wish to hurl your anathemas at me from the pulpit? In case you should wish to condescend to this, call me

"SUNSHINE."

Another Reply by Mortimer.

EDITOR GAZETTE: I have read the Rev. Mr. Van Deursen's article in your paper of the 21st in reply to "A Liberal Thinker" of date 14th. As the subject interests me considerably, and though I do not view it in the same light the reverend gentleman does, I will venture to submit to you some of my views upon the subject, and if you deem them not intrusive and worthy a place in your columns please insert.

It is not at all singular that our reverend friend should maintain the great efficacy of prayer. Those whose occupation it is to pray for others, and whose livelihood is in good part secured thereby, very naturally insist upon the vital importance of prayer. Did you ever hear a physician who makes his living by the practice of medicine denouncing drugs and the use of them? Do you often hear practicing attorneys censuring the law and legal processes? Or, is it common for a life insurance agent to say a word against the policy and propriety of life insurance? "Every man to his trade," and as praying is part of the business of the clergy it is quite in order they should "stand up" for it.

The reverend gentleman, however, does not go as far as the Catholic clergy do; they not only maintain the efficacy of prayer, but also of holy water, blessed candles, beads, rosaries, penance, crosses, etc. A Catholic devotee will insist as strenuously upon the great virtues of holy water as Mr. Van Deursen does of prayer; but some of us fail to be convinced by either, and we see much of delusion in both.

The reverend gentleman perhaps uses as strong arguments as can be advanced in favor of the subject, but I am sorry he cannot find later authorities than Moses and Luke. They may have been very eminent and good men in their time, and possibly knew as much of the efficacy of prayer as is known now, but they lived so long ago in the dim, dark ages of the past that it seems like going a good way back for proof of a proposition which, if true can be easily demonstrated by unmistakable authorities of our own time and knowledge.

If prayer is efficacious in changing the Ruler of the universe, causing him to do what he otherwise would not do, I certainly think our Christian friends ought to be able to clearly prove it by persons now living among us, and whom we know to be truthful and trustworthy witnesses. If the matter cannot be established without going back from two to five thousand years and finding somebody who said somebody was sick—that somebody prayed and the sick were healed, would it not seem that prayer had at all events ceased to be of any practical benefit to us in these days, and has no efficacy to change the the Eternal and Unchangeable?

The Rev. Mr. Van Deursen apparently accepts "A Liberal Thinker's" challenge as to trying the virtues of prayer in healing the sick, and says "bring on your hospital." But he makes the conditions so impracticable and so utterly unreasonable that the test could never be made. After a three years' trial "A Liberal Thinker" has to go to "all parts of the world" and take the affidavit of every individual that they had not at any time within the three years made a prayer general or special for the sick without excluding the prayerless ward in the hospital aforesaid. Before a thousandth part of the task could be accomplished, not only Mr. Van Deursen and "A Liberal Thinker" would have passed over the "shining river" but hundreds of millions of others who are to be used as witnesses in the case. If one prayerful individual, Pagan, Mahomedan or Christian, living, for instance, in Australia, Patagonia, or any other obscure corner of the earth, could be found who had within the three years made a prayer for the sick without excluding the particular ward in which the test was to be made, Mr. Van Deursen would doubtless claim that that prayer had "done the business" and caused the Ruler of heaven and earth to cure the sick of that particular ward, which otherwise he would not have done.

Now, if this test is ever to be made, would it not save a vast amount of time, labor and expense in going over the whole world to take the affidavit of every individual in it, for Mr. Van Deursen or some of his brethren of the clergy just to inform the Almighty that a test was to be made of the efficacy of prayer in two wards of a certain hospital, one having the benefit of prayer and the other not, and to request him not to interfere one way or the other in the latter-mentioned ward, and to take no notice for three years of any prayer for the sick, either general or special, so far as that ward was concerned? It seems to me if this arrangement could be made and the Lord was duly notified, requested and engaged, the business could be satisfactorily settled and the test made without all this travel, time, trouble and expense.

If prayer really has the efficacy that is claimed for it, it is of the highest importance that every inhabitant of the globe duly understands it; and if our Christian friends are so positive of it, why are they not willing to make a fair and practical test which will forever place the subject beyond a doubt? If on the other hand, their claims are untenable, and the Ruler of the universe is not constantly changed by the millions of prayers being continually offered up to him by educated as well as ignorant, bigoted and short-sighted mortals in all parts of the world, it is very well also that we should be aware of that fact, as thereby a great amount of effort, time, talent and expense could be saved to be directed in some more useful and profitable channel.

Mr. Van Deursen names five of our prominent and worthy physicians who are members of churches and believers in prayer. His notice of them is doubtless intended to be complimentary, but he does not tell us when they dispense to their patients a dose of calomel or blue mass whether they pray to God that it may act as a cathartic or alternative; nor when they administer ipecac, that it may nauseate; or quinine, that it may act as a tonic or stop the ague. He fails to notice Dr. Huston, Dr. Curl, Dr. Spangler, Dr. Armstrong, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Baum or Dr. Knight; and I hope his silence in reference to them implies no censure, for they are also worthy men, and many deem them equally as skilful as their orthodox and possibly more prayerful brethren. If prayer is necessary to make physic work, would not Dr. Armstrong's little sugar pills require a greater effort in prayer to make them operate than a full dose of calomel? Dr. Green, by the by, he should not have passed unnoticed. He is, I believe, also a praying physician; but it is questionable in which he has the most confidence—all-healing prayer or his "all-healing balsam."

Prayer, if you ever noticed it, Mr. Editor, is not, after all, of Christian origin or a Christian institution exclusively, but a practice borrowed from the Pagans, and in existence and taught thousands of years before the author of Christianity came into the world. The worshippers of Buddha, Brahma, Osiris, Fot, Yahoo, Thor, Odin, Jupiter, Allah, and hundreds of other gods, prayed to their deities thousands of years ago, firmly believing the same were influenced, placated, moved and appeased by the prayers thus offered. Savages and barbarians of all grades pray. The worshippers of the sun offer to it their prayers and supplications, and fancy they are heard and answered. Those who bow down to crocodiles and snakes are profuse in their prayers. The worshippers of dumb idols of stone, wood and metal are very prayerful, and feel confident their gods both hear and answer their prayers. The devout Mahometan prays regularly three times a day, always turning his face carefully toward Mecca, his holy city. Now if it can be correctly computed what all this ceaseless praying amounts to, would it

not be interesting to all classes to know just the net result? If praying is a pleasure to the devotees of prayer it is probably a harmless amusement, but as for real utility in changing the Creator of heaven and earth in his plans and purposes, I opine it will be found of no effect.

I have lived to see nearly three-score years. The first half of my life I was a believer in prayer, and practised it daily and devoutly. After many years, upon reviewing my life, I could not see that I had effected much by my prayers, and to this day I am unable to call to mind a single instance where I have reason to believe that any one of the thousands of prayers I have offered has had the slightest effect toward changing Deity in his operations toward myself or any portion of the world's inhabitants. I presume, as my prayers were sincere and honest and persistent, that they possessed about the usual amount of efficacy. And I cannot see but what my life for the last twenty-five years since I discontinued prayer has been just as moral, exemplary and useful as before, when I prayed several times a day from year's end to year's end.

My opportunities for observation of my fellow men have been fair. I have, of course, in my time known very many praying men and many who were not; but I have failed to see very much difference in the two classes. I have not found that praying physicians were more successful in the treatment of the sick than those who relied solely upon science. I have failed to see that praying lawyers were any more sure to win their cases than those who neglected prayer. I have not seen that praying merchants sold any more goods or made better profits than those who did not pray. I have failed to see that praying farmers have better crops, more timely rains, more productive soil, or finer cattle and hogs than those who did not pray at all. I therefore fail to see the advantage of so much time spent in prayer. My belief is that everything around us is governed by fixed and unchangeable laws that cannot be set aside or changed by entreaty or supplication—that every event that has ever transpired has had a natural and sufficient cause to produce it. As all results are the effects of causes, and as there are causes sufficient for all results, I cannot see the necessity of prayer to effect any changes or any results.

To my mind it would be perfectly useless for us to pray that every morning the sun might rise in the east and set in the evening in the west; that summer may year after year succeed winter and winter summer; that the laws of attraction and gravitation may not be suspended; that the atmosphere may continue to surround the earth; that light and heat may be regularly dispensed to us by the fountain of light; that twice two may always be four, but equally as sensible as the numberless prayers that are offered for all the blessings connected with our existence.

It is claimed there is a Being who hears all prayer and answers such as he sees fit; but if any one being is compelled to listen to the countless millions of prayers that are incessantly being made, would it not be enough to confuse and craze a mind far greater than Michael or Gabriel?

Let me ask what kind of a Deity it would be who every day, every hour, every minute—yes, every second—changed his plans and purposes in keeping with this constant outpouring of prayer, much of it ignorant, senseless, absurd, dictatorial and conflicting?

The Rev. Theodore Parker once said: "The only prayer that amounts to anything is effort," and I believe the position a correct one. In this kind of prayer, well directed, let us all freely improve and aim to excel, and I believe it will be far more profitable and satisfactory than this constant begging, beseeching and supplicating the *Unseen and Unknown* which the clergy so persistently tell us is so pleasing to Him and so necessary to ourselves.

The Rev. Mr. Van Deursen calls our attention to the fact that our ideas of a life beyond the grave are obtained from the Bible. I beg his pardon, but such is not the case. The much larger and older part of the Bible says little or nothing about a future existence, and all its promises, penalties and references are confined to this life only. The new testament vaguely throws out some observations about the "Heavenly Jerusalem," etc., but it was not written until long after the doctrine of a future life was taught and believed by many nations who were never Jews or Christians.

Mr. Van Deursen also alludes to God as being the maker of our bodies. He is probably in the same sense as He is the maker of horses, dogs, fishes, worms and insects. I will not, however, enlarge upon this subject. I fear I have already been too prolix. I beg your pardon for trespassing so far upon your kindness. D. B. MORTIMER.

[To be continued.]

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