

Torch of Reason

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A Supreme Power.

As far back as we have any written record of human doings, men have tried to account for the phenomena of nature. Before science opened the eyes of our blind, ignorant ancestors, each phenomenon was the act of a special god, and finally the special act of a supreme god; but as the great laws of motion, of attraction, of sound, of sight, of heat, of electricity, etc., have been discovered, even the special act of a supreme power has weakened until those professing to believe most in a god really believe but little in his (or its) immediate superintendency of the phenomena around us. No Christian carpenter or painter would think of ascribing his fall from a staging, to a special act of his god. If asked the cause of his descent through space, he would say, "The attraction of gravity". The cause of the rainbow is now known even to our school children, and no one, unless it be some very ignorant person, thinks it is a special act of deity—a promise of no more flood. So it is with all the workings of nature. The special-god theory is left to uneducated barbarians, and the special act of a supreme power has become so diluted by science, the true savior of the world, that but very few really believe in it, even the so-called believers being reduced to the position of a general supervision theory.

We then have the three classes of believers: those who believe in special gods, each having special powers and attributes; those who believe in one supreme power whose

special acts are the cause of all nature's phenomena; and those who believe in a supreme power who set the universe in motion, who originated the laws of heat, electricity, attraction, etc., and who has a general supervision of all things.

To the first class, who are mostly found in heathen lands, we must give, as fast as their nature will permit, a higher civilization, then the belief in many gods will grow weaker and weaker and at last become extinct. The second class, i.e., those who believe in the special act theory, are in a process of evolution. There are but few, comparatively speaking, of this class, and as they are entirely surrounded in civilized countries by influences which are fast leading them out of their befogging error, we need not waste much time in trying to help them. But the last class is the one with which the battle of reason must be fought, and if their idea is right—if there are reasons for believing in a supreme power, be this power an intelligent one or otherwise—let us find those reasons, if possible—let us establish the FACT, and then let us be deists, as was that great man of revolutionary times, Thomas Paine; but if after searching carefully we find no reasons for establishing the supreme power idea, but positive proof or good reasons for thinking that there is no one supreme power, then let us be Atheists. Then, once again, if we come fairly and squarely face to face with the FACT that we DO NOT KNOW whether there is ONE SUPREME POWER, OR LAW, controlling all other laws, or whether all laws acting together, one being no more supreme than another, produce what we perceive—that WE DO NOT KNOW whether these laws whose effects we can see everywhere are eternal or not, then let us be honest and say, "I DO NOT KNOW," and be called Agnostics.

Let us be established. Correct reasoning is the hardest task that can be set for the human mind, but let us undertake it. What is the cause of the results we see? We see that one force or power of nature acts in one direction and another in another. Philosophers say, and our reasons agree, that the resolution of forces causes things to be as they are. That is, one force acting in this direction and another acting in another direction, another in another, etc., etc., produce the general equilibrium or result we have. Then it would seem that there is no supreme power or force, but many forces acting together, which causes and keeps the machinery of the universe in motion. We are, then, Atheists, are we?

But wait a moment. Have these forces of gravitation, of heat and light, of electricity, etc., always existed? Most things we are acquainted with have had a begin-

ning. Did not these forces have a beginning, and was it not some supreme power that put them into action? How could they exist without having been started? There must be, then, a First Great Cause, a Deity, and we are Deists.

But again we pause. The same reasoning that leads us to ask, "How could they exist without having been started?" leads us to ask how this supreme power could exist without being started, and we are driven back to the question, but ask it somewhat modified, "Did these forces have a beginning, and did some supreme power put them into motion?" and the honest answer comes, leaving us without any foundation for belief, "I DO NOT KNOW."

Probably mankind will never know. To say that one knows there is a god, is to either intentionally lie or unintentionally confess a poor judgment, while to give him (or it) the form of a man, or call it a spirit, is the height of absurdity. This question of a deity is, as we have said, an old one, and the contention, the strife, the bloodshed and the stopping of human growth that it has caused is simply appalling. Close your eyes, dear reader, and try to see with your mind's eye the awful history of the gods. Ah, the war is almost over! See the white flag of truce waving from the fortress of civilization! What are the words? "I DO NOT KNOW."

Thanks be to Go'od.

We wish we could in some way express our appreciation of the friends who have proven faithful to us in our progressive, educational work. When we think of those here at home who have sacrificed much money, time and labor, and "eternally kept at it", we are spurred on to greater endeavors, and when we think of those who have never seen us—who live hundreds and thousands of miles away—sending us money, kind words and literary help, we become almost insane with the desire to make our work worthy of their free-will gifts, sympathy and love. As we progress in this work, it is revealed to us more and more what great difficulties, what great opposition we are having, and will have to overcome. No one knows the bitterness—the underhanded workings—the misrepresentations of those who oppose the forward march of true Secularism.

A few years ago we could not have been made to believe that so many people are so uselessly unjust, but we have also found that a few, if strongly united in a just cause, can withstand a host and will soon have a host of their own. This is the way every great reform that the world has ever known has been brought about.

Friends, you who have been friends indeed to the Liberal University, let us thank you again for what you have done, and let us again assure you that although we may make mistakes, we will, as long as we live, keep you informed in regard to our progress and do our very best to make our school the center of a progressive, rapidly-enlarging, educational, Secular circle which will soon encircle the whole world.

Stand Erect.

Sometimes those whom we have thought would be loyal have proved cowardly traitors; and for no cause whatever excepting the fear of popular opinion and the love of the almighty dollar they talk just opposite to what they did when they thought there was a chance to MAKE SOMETHING out of Freethought professions. We seem dazed and vainly try to comprehend that some men are naturally selfish, cowardly, deceptive traitors.

It is easy for one whose interest, or imaginary interest, demands it, to find an excuse for proving false if he is but anxious to do so, and while we are no prophet, or son of a prophet, we wish to prophesy this much: The poor, miserable cowards, who hold their mental fingers on the pulse of popular opinion in order to determine just what position to take in regard to the greatest question of our time, will not only lose their own self-respect, but will gain the contempt of all classes.

My friend, it is a losing game. You may think that your family's interests lie in the path of its leader being a hypocrite, but you have not looked on all sides of the question. Your children will know what you are and will either imitate or have a contempt for you which cannot be balanced with gold, or houses, or lands.

Nothing is lost by being a man—by being honest—by letting every one know that you stand on the solid ground of what you think are true principles. Every time you hedge and fence—every time you deny what you secretly believe to be true—every time you try to "smooth it over" with all classes, you are losing much more than you are making. We do not blame you; we only pity you, and will try to help you.

You poor, miserable, mistaken coward, try to stand erect!

Another Delay.

Everything seemed favorable for the work of completing the main building so that we could use part of it at least by Oct. 3. The sills and other heavy timbers were put in place, the heavy 30-foot lower joice were put down and the floor-