

Torch of Reason

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Cramped.

This week our school has increased in numbers about thirty-five per cent. This fills up our study room almost to its limit and will necessitate the organization of other classes. What to do we hardly know, but we can only do our best. We ought to have more room. Our regular school building should be finished at once. We should have another good teacher who is able to teach the natural sciences. What can we do? We can hold the fort—we can keep up the fire against old grizzled Ignorance and Superstition until we receive reinforcements. And although we sometimes grow faint with over exertion and the scorching breath of the enemy, yet like the explorers of old, we have burned our bridges behind us and we will—we must conquer.

"I Do Not Know."

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

In an able article in your issue of September 8th you discuss the question of a "Supreme Power", and from the various standpoints of your reasoning reach the conclusion "I do not know". Pardon me for the suggestion, but your line of reasoning applied to any of the phenomena of nature would lead to the same conclusion. With equal force you might say the earth did not revolve on its axis or move in its orbit around the sun. No one ever saw it move, yet from known facts, and the application of reason to those facts, we know it does so move, and know it with absolute certainty.

The question of a Supreme Power is, of course, one of fact. To demonstrate its existence, or non-existence, can only be accomplished by the application of our reasoning powers to known facts. If we should see something in the image of man, and nature was performing some of its phenomena, under its immediate direction, our reason would teach us, with unerring certainty, that this was the personal God, although we might not understand in what manner the thing was accomplished. Knowing the two sides of a triangle, we can ascertain the length of the other side without measurement, and such knowledge is certain, and we need no tape line to verify the accuracy of such knowledge. We know it is so simply because of other knowledge. In the consideration of what this supreme power is, self-evident truth, coupled with facts within our knowledge, should be called into use in reaching a rational conclusion. We therefore base our argument on what the human mind recognizes as such facts and truths.

First, there can be no such thing as an absolute vacuum, or nothing. Therefore the universe is, always has been, and always will be. Second, the universe is limitless, and therefore centerless. Third, there was no beginning, and can be no end. Fourth, there is nothing in the universe but matter, and all so-called natural law is but the effect of matter operating on matter. This may not yet be termed a self-evident truth, but is capable of demonstration from the fact that there is no such thing as a vacuum. Fifth that no part can be equal to or greater than the whole.

As there can be no vacuum, and the universe is, because it must be, and as it had no beginning, and can have no end, there is no cause for its existence, and no supreme power, in the sense used by the ordinary man, must be a central power. Its abiding place must be as much here, upon this earth, as in the remotest imaginable spot. Such a supreme power must be here and everywhere. It must be co-extensive with the universe itself.

So-called natural law is but the effect produced by matter operating upon matter. In the springtime all vegetable and animal matter seems to take on new life. The grass shoots forth from its seeming hiding-place. The leaf bursts forth from seemingly lifeless trees. The bird builds its nest, and most animals mate. We say all this is due to natural law, but the fact is it is due to matter (the sun) operating on matter (the earth). The process we do not know, but we do know the cause from our reason and knowledge of the fact that the earth has reached a position where it receives the more direct rays of the

sun, and the effect is the new life.

We say the wind blows and the rain falls by reason of natural law, but in reality it is due to the action of matter on matter: the blowing of the wind being due to pressure at some point from above upon the air, which causes it to move in proportion to the pressure, and the fall of rain is due to the condensation of matter, caused by the inability of the sun to give it sufficient heat, and becoming heavier than the air, the earth pulls it to itself.

It rises, as we say, by the laws of evaporation, but this in reality is due to the action of the sun. It is so with human life. The action of matter upon matter brought it into existence. It developed it by a slow gradual process. Man is but matter, and the absorption of matter, acting within himself, causes him to live, think and have his being. So all we call natural law is but the effect of the action of matter on matter. The earth and planets are not kept in place, and do not travel in their orbits around the sun, by reason of any natural law, but their position and course is due to the action of one upon the other, just as the organs of the human body act by reason of the action of one upon the other, and all upon each other. All is but the effect of matter operating upon matter. What is true of our planetary system must be true of all others. This is self-evident.

We have then nothing in the universe but matter and the changes produced in matter operating on matter. What these effects may be are as varied and numerous as the quality and mass, and the varied and countless positions which matter may be in with respect to itself and other matter. These varied and countless positions, which we call the phenomena of nature, are due entirely to changing positions. The universe is but one endless chain of matter, constantly changing form and place, and doing it by reason of its own inert power. That power is the whole universe itself, and is the supreme power.

Applying this reasoning to the earth, on the facts as we know them, we can account for all the phenomena of nature. By them we ascertain the cause.

The changed positions of the earth to the sun make our seasons. This constant changing position brings forth the seed which ripens into perfect grain. The pressure of matter upon the air gives us the gentle breeze, as well as the cyclone. It causes the waters to evaporate and fall in gentle rains which moistens and refreshes the verdure of the earth, aided by the action of the sun. This action of matter upon matter lifted up our mountains, and made our valleys; sunk portions and covered it with the sea for countless ages, and then elevated it; made our rocks and

other geological formations; made the little cell, from which all so-called life springs; caused it to grow and develop, and become the perfect life, and the parts in time, by reason of their changing form, could no longer maintain their true relation to other parts, and being out of harmony with them, and by reason of changing form, death comes.

And so it is with everything here and elsewhere. They may be accounted for by matter and its action varying in mass and position, upon other matter varying in mass and position. This can account for all changes on the earth and in the universe. It needs no stretch of the imagination, or indulgence in fancied supernatural power, to discern the cause. "I do not know," say you, but basing our judgment on the facts, our reason from those facts, answers that we do know that matter, acting on matter, and all combined in one limitless expanse, known as the universe, is the supreme power.

CHARLES K. TENNEY.

"We Do Know."

Our beloved friend and co-worker, Mr. Chas. K. Tenney, of Madison, Wis., has, under the title, "I Do Not Know," given the readers of the Torch some very excellent thoughts. The discussion of such questions in the spirit of fairness, kindness and helpfulness is bound to do us all much good and through us lead many to the pinnacle of the stable and lofty tower of Free-thought.

We know that most of Friend Tenney's arguments are based on sound reasoning, but we fail to see that he has proven our statement in error. He says that "we do know that matter, acting on matter, and all combined in one limitless expanse, known as the universe, is the supreme power".

Now here is where our friend has certainly made a mistake. He should not have said "we", for it is a fact that the editor of the Torch of Reason does not know that there is a supreme power. The idea of a man-like god is too absurd to be admitted into our discussion, and readers should not for a moment think either of us entertains such silly, unscientific notions; but we know there are certain powers of nature. Now these powers manifest to us in the form of light, heat, inertia, gravity, electricity, etc., all combined, according to Mr. Tenney's reasoning, in the supreme power; but, although the resultant of all these forces is the universe as we find it, yet some of these powers are in direct opposition to one another. For example, the power known as molecular attraction or cohesion is directly antagonistic to the power known as heat. The resultant of all these powers cannot