

FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL



Vol. 2.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1878.

No. 1.

W. J. R. HARGRAVE, Editor.

Editorial Contributors:

B. F. UNDERWOOD.
MRS. SARA A. UNDERWOOD.
MRS. ELMINA D. SLENKRE.
ALLEN PRINGLE.
WM. EMMETTE COLEMAN.

J. ICE EVANS.
R. B. BUTLAND.
LT. COL. G. W. GRIFFITHS.
W. B. COOKE.

DR. JAMES F. CLARKE.

Among liberal Christians, as our friends the Unitarians seem now to prefer calling themselves, there are few who hold a higher place than Dr. James Freeman Clarke, of Boston, and there are not many, we imagine, among what we fondly call, "advanced" thinkers who will not listen patiently to anything he may have to say in arrest of judgment why the school of Channing, Gannett, Peabody, Eliot and Walker should not stand aside and make room for the advocates of Free Religion, such as Frothingham and Adler of New York, Dudley and Savage, of Boston, Swing and, (shall we add!) Thomas of Chicago—that is, for men who speak, more or less clearly, their own, present, personal convictions, and not merely trample under their feet all man-made creeds, confessions, articles, etc., but, as we interpret their meaning, refuse to be bound, hand and foot, by the *ipse dixit*, the mere word, of any man, God-man, or God that ever appeared on the face of the earth.

The "orthodox" have, up to this time, contemptuously refused to share the name of Christian with the Unitarians, claiming that they alone are entitled to the appellation. The Catholics, of course, treat the Evangelicals with the same sovereign contempt, and insist that they alone have "the power of the keys," and all that sort of thing. There are not wanting signs and symptoms, however, that the fight will not, forever, rage around that name. Deeper issues are now to be considered, and no name under heaven can arrest the spirit of inquiry that is beginning to manifest itself among all classes. We say nothing of the higher order of thinkers in Germany, France, and England, but we can, even on this continent, proudly point to Mr. Abbot of the *Index*, and the heroic—though all too small—band who fight under the banner of Free

Religion. They openly proclaim that they care nothing for the name, and look on it rather as a hindrance than a help to our further social and moral progress. To call a thing "Christian" is no recommendation in their eyes; rather is it a reason why they should question and mistrust, if not actually and actively oppose, every such institution or custom till the reason and reasonableness of its existence be proved. The contest—if we read the stars aright—is likely to be a long and severe one. The Christians of the orthodox type will, no doubt, "hold the fort" as long as they can, and even the Unitarians, as a sect, will we fear, for many a day, fight shy of, and stand aloof from, those who plant themselves on natural reason alone—not considering it any part of their duty to call Jesus "Lord," or to accept his word for more than its inherent value.

When we see, with our own eyes, outward or inward, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, we believe that mathematical truth and accept it in all our actions—caring nothing, except it be as a matter of historical curiosity, whether it was Euclid or his grandfather or great grandfather who first apprehended the truth and fixed it by definite proof. So when Christ declares that God sends his rain upon the just and unjust alike, we accept the truth, as we see that it accords with the facts of nature, obvious to our senses. When we hear him declare that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father, we may perhaps take the liberty to doubt, if (his is literally true and not rather to be understood as an oriental exaggeration or a mere figure of speech. When, again, he tells us to give to every one that asks of us, we may decline following the precept. We attribute this "declension" to the comparative clearness of our intellect, but if it please the "Christians" to attribute it to the hardness of our hearts, they are welcome to the conclusion. We leave them to accept the precept literally, and only hope that they will be careful to follow it. Then once more will all men say, "See how those Christians love one another!"

The orthodox speak in such wrathful and contemptuous terms of those that they are accustomed to call sceptics, agnostics, infidels, deists and atheists (often using the two latter epithets in the same breath), that we, Freethinkers, can hold little or no intercourse with them; but with men of the mental calibre of Dr.