

# FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL

IN THINGS DEMONSTRATED CERTAIN

UNITY

ATION

IN WHATSOEVER MAY BE DOUBTED

FREE DIVERSITY

ERENCE

IN ALL THINGS

CHARITY

OTION

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## UNITY AND CHARITY AMONG FREETHINKERS.

BY WILLIAM ENMETTE COLEMAN.

It is a fact patent to all, that great diversity of opinion on philosophic and theological points exists among Freethinkers; indeed, dissimilarity of thought and disassociation in sentiment are necessarily implied in the term "Freethinking"—a Freethinker being one who does not follow in the beaten track of established opinion, but who, in the determination of all subjects presented him, exercises his own powers of analysis, and judgment, irrespective of what so-called authorities in church and state may assert, or of what the *dicta* of prejudiced public opinion or tyrannous St. Cuslom may propound or enforce. Each one being, therefore, free to decide for himself relative to the merits or demerits, truth or falsity of the various conflicting ideas widely prevalent in our midst, and there being the greatest dissimilitude in human mentality, no two persons being constituted precisely alike, antagonism in opinion and difference in conception necessarily and inevitably arise among Freethinkers, as with all others.

Coupled with this free diversity in thought, there is, however, —or at least there should be,—a bond of union between all those denominating themselves Freethinkers or Liberals,—the presence of a common foe, unscrupulous, arbitrary, dogmatic, dictatorial, persecutive, in Modern Christianity, enthroned in solemn awe, and in full panoply of power throughout the civilized world. This ruthless foe, its hands gory with the blood of the slaughtered millions who dared think for themselves in times agone, its very name pregnant with awful significance of fire and faggot, rack and gibbet, presents an unbroken front to the desultory, scattered attacks of the unorganized, disunited Liberal thinkers now found in nearly every locality.

Alarmed at the steady advance in Liberal sentiment, the growth of Freethought and mental emancipation, new encroachments upon the rights and liberties of those dissenting from its dogmatic finalities, are constantly being made by the Church. Tighter and still tighter does the Christian hierarchy seek to fasten the cords of ecclesiastical despotism around the throat of Progressive Freethought, stifling the utterance of every criticism of its own hideous deformities, every appeal to free, enlightened reason, truth's only legitimate arbiter and umpire.

To meet the crisis fast approaching, to stem the rising torrent of theologic usurpation encircling all true lovers of "universal mental liberty," unity of action and organized persistent defense is, on their part, imperatively demanded; else, ere we be fully aware thereof, the chains of legalized churchianic thralldom will hold us in their fast embrace, despoiled of the inherent rights, privileges and immunities due to us as freemen and as citizens.

Such being the case, the Liberals of Canada are to be congratulated upon the vigorous efforts recently made by them in the matter of organization and propagandism; for, without combined endeavor, but little can be secured. The organization of a General Freethought Association, and the establishment of a monthly journal devoted to the advocacy of the most advanced thought of this most advanced age, mark a new era in the history of Freethought in Canada; and, so far as can be gathered, both enterprises are inaugurated under auspicious and encouraging circumstances. May the mission of each be ever "conquering and to conquer!"

The triple apothegm adopted by the General Association as the embodiment of its course of action, is felicitously appropriate and well-timed. Recognizing the basic fact of the wide divergence in opinion found, on all occasions, in collective bodies of Freethinkers, it promulgates as its unisonous bond, unity in all things demonstrated, free diversity in all things doubted, and charity in all things whatsoever; than which a nobler sentiment could not form the groundwork of operation of any associative body. The principles embodied in this comprehensive triune aphorism should form the working basis of all Freethinkers throughout the world; and could they all be brought to see their intrinsic value, and the still greater value of combination of effort for mutual self-defense and extension of the truth, vastly more might be accomplished,