

John Weiss Biography

John Weiss

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Biography

John Weiss (28 June 1818-9 March 1879) was a radical Unitarian clergyman who wrote *The Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton, 1864). He held pulpits in New Bedford and Watertown, Massachusetts, during which time he translated and interpreted for the American audience the major works of Schiller and Goethe. A product of Harvard College and Harvard Divinity School, he helped found the Free Religious Association and gave a major address at its first meeting in Boston in 1867. As a free religionist, he attempted to push the Free Religious Association into social action and a more clear-cut creed. Militant and outspoken, Weiss was, in the words of Octavius Brooks Frothingham, a "flame of fire," a warrior "with his sword constantly unsheathed." Nevertheless he was a man of refined literary taste and a member of the "Town and Country Club," founded by Bronson Alcott. He was known for his wit, practical jokes, and flaming oratory. His biography, to be written by Frothingham, never appeared, due to objections by the Weiss family. His main contribution was his stimulating and abrasive influence on his contemporaries who left more of a written record than Weiss himself. In addition to numerous articles in *Index* and other journals, he wrote *American Religions* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871) and *The Wit and Humor of Shakespeare* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876). He was born and died in Boston.