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to publication.

THE AGE OF REASON
SPECIAL
ISSUE

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'Conway was right: "So long as a link remains....binding
reason or heart, Paine's Age of Reason will live. It is not a
mere book - it is a man's heart."'

Chapman Cohen.

PAINE AS A BIBLICAL CRITIC

by

N. M. Goldberg.

PAINE INTENDED The Age of Reason to defend 'true religion' from the attacks of atheists. It proved, on the contrary, by the common admission both of his enemies and friends, to be 'the Bible of the atheists'. And atheists, especially, both hitherto and now, have done and are doing everything to preserve for posterity the name and the works of the great freethinker.

In deciding the basic question of Paine's philosophy, it stands out that he is a materialist - even though less consistent a one than his contemporaries, the French materialists of the eighteenth century.

According to Paine, a real material world exists outside man and his consciousness: 'Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on.' Man cannot by his own will alter creation: 'It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed.'

Matter, as Paine thought, generates mind; therefore matter is primary and thought, its derivative, secondary. 'Who can say', he asks, 'what exceeding fine section of fine matter it is that produces a thought in what we call the mind?'

He concentrated all the force of his criticism on the Bible, which played an immense role in the life of Protestant America. The least doubt of the truth of the Bible was considered the gravest transgression; and the doubter was cruelly persecuted and punished. Clearly the exposure of Biblical fictions undermined religious beliefs and furthered the spread of unbelief.

Paine relied on the results of scientific criticism of the Bible begun by Hobbes and Spinoza and continued by the English deists: Anthony Collins (1676-1729), Thomas Chubb (1679-1747), Matthew Tindal (1653-1733), Thomas Woolston (1670-1733) and others. Besides popularizing their results he advanced some original conjectures.

He begins by attacking the belief in the divine origin of the Bible and the idea of revelation as Spinoza and the English deists had already done.

What is this revelation and what does Paine mean? He explains: Revelation is a communication of something which the person to whom the thing is revealed did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it; nor enable me to tell it, or write it. Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to anything done upon earth of which man himself is the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and, therefore, is not the word of God.'

Moncure Conway, in his biography of Paine, considers his treatment of the New Testament as more valuable than the discoveries of such representatives of the historical school of criticism as Baur and Strauss. Conway thinks it is a merit of his approach to have shown how the historical Jesus is derived from the mythical Christ. Paine does not go so far as to deny a historical Christ, but states for the first time that the problem of whether Christ existed or not is of no importance.

The mere existence of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, he writes, 'is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground either to believe or disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of "It may be so; and what then?"' Again; 'It is not, then, the existence or non-existence of the persons that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend.'

He makes the most of the fact that, even if all four gospels agreed with one another, that would not demonstrate the truth of their contents, but that if they do not agree with one another, their contents are a fortiori false....

The ethics of the Old Testament were obnoxious to him, and in a bitter, destructive fashion he exposes their inhumanity. In The Age of Reason he writes: 'Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and tortuous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.'

A great part of the Bible is 'scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices. To read the Bible without horror, we must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible is fabulous than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.'

The Age of Reason was first published in France (to begin with in English, and then also in French, in a translation by the wife of Condorcet). There, it made no particular impression, since long before 1794 the French reader had been acquainted with the atheist literature of the French Enlightenment. In England, where Paine had been outlawed, the publication and distribution of his work were subject to every kind of persecution. For publishing Paine's pamphlet, An Examination of Prophecies, Daniel Eaton was sentenced to stand once a month in the pillory and to eleven months imprisonment. In 1819 Richard Carlile, for publishing the 'theological' works of Paine, was fined £1,500 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

The reading and dissemination of an 'atheistical' book written by an author who had been outlawed, the publication and distribution his work caused Marx to contemplate in a letter to the New York Daily Tribune (1854) that; 'It is no wonder if Thomas Paine's Rights of Man was publically burnt in this free and happy country.' Nevertheless, in spite of various obstacles, Paine's books reached the English reader.

Engels repeatedly pointed to the popularity among the English working class of the 'well-known democrat', Thomas Paine. In 1843, in Letters from London, Engels described working-class meetings at which 'Christianity is subjected to downright attack, and Christians are called "our enemies"'. Besides, he added emphatically: 'Workers now have, in good cheap editions, translations of the works of French philosophers of the last century, chiefly Rousseau's Social Contract, the System of Nature, and various works of Voltaire; moreover, in penny or twopenny pamphlets and in newspapers they find an explanation of Communist principles; in just the same way there are in the hands of workers cheap editions of the works of Thomas Paine and Shelley.'

In 1845 Engels called George Forster, who had supported the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and died on the scaffold, a German Thomas Paine. Writing

to a meeting of Chartists in London at the end of 1845 in connection with the anniversary of the proclamation of the French Republic of 1792, Engels emphasized the fact that participants in the meeting 'honoured the memory of Thomas Paine and the democrats of all lands'.

As is shown by the latest investigation by Webb* of the literature read by English workers, the works of Paine, in spite of all impediments, made their way among the working class and were in particular demand. In working-class newspapers and periodicals, especially in the Poor Man's Guardian, the works of Paine were advertised in every way.

The Age of Reason exerted an anti-religious influence on the working-class reader even at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Merciless criticism of the Bible, revelations of the hypocrisy of the clergy, a passionate call to readers to rely on the facts of Nature and human reason, and not on prevalent religious beliefs - all this, which constituted the spirit and content of The Age of Reason, in combination with Paine's political radicalism and straightforward humanism, determined the attitude to him of different social groups both in his life and after his death.

Today, as 150 years ago, the words of Thomas Paine sound like a battle-cry: 'All national institutions of Churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profits.'

*R.K.Webb, The British Working Class Reader, 1790-1848 (London, 1955).

The above article was originally published in the Annual of the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism, Leningrad, 1960, No. IV. It was translated by the late Archibald Robertson and a digest of it published in The Humanist for December, 1961.

"A 2d abridgment of Paine's Rights of Man was 'in the hands of almost every countryman, and with a view of enlightening the Highlanders 'it was translated into Gaelic'."

Letter of Sir Wm. Maxwell, Nov. 19, 1792.
Quoted in The Awakening of Scotland by
W.L. Mathieson, p. 124.

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T H E P A I N E C O N V E R S I O N M Y T H .

by Robert W. Morrell.

THE CONTENT MATTER of literature coming from the evangelical wing of the Christian Church is usually so silly as to deserve little serious consideration. From time to time you meet the odd item worthy of closer study, but such times are few and far between. A booklet I came across recently fits into the category of those unworthy of attention on all points but one, it is this one point that makes the booklet worthy of further consideration - but only in regard to this one issue. The booklet concerned is entitled The Impossibility of Agnosticism by the Reverend Leith Samuel (there is no indication in the booklet that the author is a professional religionist), and is published by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. The point that arrested my attention was the claim made on pages nine and ten that Thomas Paine recanted of his deistical views.

Stories of Paine's recantation or conversion were once the stock in trade of any self-respecting evangelical preacher or writer. In our more sophisticated age with its closer attention to detail, claims of such a specific nature have given way to those of a more general character, thus we hear little of the alleged conversions of Darwin or Bradlaugh, and more of the conversions of anonymous groups of men on rafts in the middle of the ocean after their ship had been sunk, through their prayers being answered, or so it is claimed. Mr. Samuel is, however, one of the old school, hence we get the story of Paine's recantation, and, for good measure no doubt, that of Voltaire's also.

Both Paine and Voltaire are, according to Mr. Samuel, on record as having, when faced with death, second thoughts. They were, our reverend cleric assures us, among "the most ardent (pursuers) of pleasure", who, when approaching death, started to "sit up and think." Now while being no expert on Voltaire I do know enough to reject Mr. Samuel's claim in regard to the French philosopher; in Paine's case, on the other hand, I have studied the matter in great depth and would retort to Mr. Samuel that he is talking just so much rubbish!

Mr. Samuel's tale is taken from the memoirs of Stephen Grellet, an American religious fanatic of French extraction. He was told it by an employee, one Mary Roscoe. Another identical tale, unmentioned by Mr. Samuel, is derived from a Charles Collins, who was told it by one Mary Hinsdale. Both women are one, Hinsdale being the married name of Roscoe. Mary Roscoe was employed by a Quaker religious leader, Willett Hicks, a friend of Paine's, during the time Paine was dying. She claims to have been sent to deliver an item to Paine and while there to have conversed with him. Paine, she tells us, called out "with intense feeling", "Lord Jesus have mercy upon me", and, "if ever the Devil has had any agency in any work he has had it in me writing that book (The Age of Reason)". Paine is supposed to have asked Roscoe's

opinion of the book and later to have expressed a wish to have, like her, burned it. Having been but instructed by Hicks to deliver something to Paine, the original claim, Roscoe developed it into one of "constant" attendance. Such is her tale as related by Grellet and Collins. Needless to say there is not a scrap of evidence to corroborate it.

When the present writer challenged the truth of his claim that Paine had recanted, Mr.Samuel replied (letter of June,29,1967) that "The unimpeachable testimony of this gentleman (Grellet) seemed to outweigh anything found from contrary sources." Unfortunately, as was later revealed, Mr.Samuel had not bothered to look up what the "contrary sources" had to say on the matter.

Roscoe's tale was exposed as a lie by William Cobbett, who met and cross-examined both her and Collins. Mr.Samuel was quite stunned when this was brought to his attention, and makes (letter of July 7) the lame excuse that he was "unaware" of it - this after laying it down that Grellet's testimony outweighed "anything" from "contrary sources". It seems all too clear that Mr.Samuel just did not bother to do his homework, a fact which did not, however, prevent him from allowing no fewer than fourteen reprints of his booklet since it originally appeared in 1950!

William Cobbett while in New York in 1818 began to collect material for a life of Paine, in doing so he became acquainted with both Mary Hinsdale (Roscoe) and Charles Collins. Collins informed Cobbett that Paine had recanted. Cobbett requested evidence and Collins produced a paper containing a statement, so he maintained, made by Hinsdale. Armed with this document, Cobbett called on Hinsdale-then living at 10,Anthony Street, New York, and showed it her, requesting its authentication, this Hinsdale refused to give, maintaining that she could give no information as to any of the document being true, she claimed never to have seen the paper before, nor to have given Collins any authorisation to speak in her name. So the story should have faded into the mists of obscurity, like its alleged author. However, such is not to be the case for along comes Mr.Samuel to resurrect it. Roscoe, who, incidently, took opium, also invented another recantation story, this time concerning a Quaker by name Mary Lockwood. Roscoe, meeting the brother of Lockwood (after the woman had died) told him his sister had recanted and wanted her (Roscoe) to say so at the funeral. This claim was fully and publically demonstrated as pure fiction, or in other words, nothing but lies. Such, then, is the character of Roscoe; even Collins told another biographer of Paine, the American Gilbert Vale, that it was commonly held among her fellow religionists that no credit should be given to her statements. This, then, is the source of Mr.Samuel's tale. Either Grellet was taken in by Roscoe - which is quite possible, or, and this is equally possible, he deliberately lied. So much for the "unimpeachable testimony" Mr.Samuel relies so uncritically on.

Willet Hicks, Roscoe's employer at the time she was supposed to be constantly attending Paine, pronounced her story as "pious fraud and fabrication", he said that he had never sent her with anything to deliver to Paine, and that she had never spoken with him. He is also

THE RELEVANCE OF
THE
" AGE OF REASON "
FOR TODAY .
By Robert W. Morrell

IT DOES NOT fall to the lot of many authors to produce a work which 175 years after the date of publication remains a source of inspiration and controversy. Thomas Paine's book, The Age of Reason, is one of the select few coming into that category.

The Age of Reason is without doubt one of the truly great deistical works in the English language. Though by no means the first such work, it certainly became the most influential and widely read of such books. The controversy aroused was carried on with impassioned intensity, an intensity which makes it almost impossible outside the pages of a large volume to give an adequate description.

Paine directed his words towards the awakening working class, not only of Britain but of all countries. He wrote with a clarity of meaning and a simplicity of language that made his words go home to his readership with a force few other works have managed. This, in the eyes of established authority, was the greatest danger they presented. The workers of the 18th. century formed a class which hardly merits the description literate. Many of those able to read were in some form of mental blinkers as they were strongly influenced by the prejudices of low church evangelism on one hand and methodism or other forms of religious dissent on the other. The character of the class is all too well illustrated by the actions of the "Church and King" mob responsible for burning the home and library of the Unitarian Priestley.

Yet when all is said about the generally hostile climate of opinion among workers towards unorthodox views, it remains evident that there existed a growing group among them who saw in Paine's work ideas which accurately reflected their own opinions. His criticism of institutionalised religion must have struck deep into the minds of many religious dissenters, for by no means all dissent was strictly theological and lacked political motivation. The followers of Alexander Kilham, who broke away from Methodism to form the Methodist New Connexion in 1797, certainly appear to have been influenced by him for there are frequent references to them in association with Paine's name. In Huddersfield they were called 'Tom Paine Methodists', while

at a chapel in Halifax they formed a reading and debating club where Paine's works were among those discussed. The official methodist Conference, in explanation of the Kilham secession to their Church in Ireland, stated: "We shall lose all the turbulent disturbers of our Zion....all who have embraced the sentiments of Paine..."¹

It was not Paine's intention to publish his views on religion until old age, but, as he tells us in The Age of Reason, a situation arose which rendered "a work of this kind exceedingly necessary." The ruling oligarchy in Britain thought otherwise. Whatever the sceptical attitudes towards religion on the part of many members of the aristocracy, the impact of the French Revolution had closed their ranks in fear of the growing working class emulating their fellows in France. A campaign had been instituted to rid Britain of all but views favourable in religion as in politics to the status quo. The warring factions among the oligarchy who, as M.W.Wiseman (J.M.Robertson) wrote,² "a few years before had been scandalising the pious by their Deism and disrespect to the reigning creed", were hastily converted to the conviction that orthodoxy must be maintained among the working masses. As religion was considered very much a part of the structure of government in the 18th. century, the unholy alliance between reverent and irreverent sections of the aristocracy posed no real problems. The important thing was to ensure that religion continued to inculcate in the minds of working people an abject resignation to their lot in life, and a humble acceptance of the unquestioned right of their "betters" to lord it over them. As the Duchess of Buckingham expressed it concerning some flickerings of the notion of spiritual equality on the part of religious dissenters: "It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth."³

The Christian religion is strictly an authoritarian system; it faithfully mirrors the nature of society as existing during its formative years. When adopted by the secular Roman authorities it gave by way of reward the claim that they derived their powers directly from God, and consequently they were beyond challenge from mere mortal men. Paine struck at the roots of this by bluntly denying the right so claimed, and asserting the equality of men. He stated that all churches (including the non-Christian variety) had been established to enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit. Paine developed his ~~theme~~ with a two pronged attack against the fundamental tenets on which the theory of divine authority was erected, revelation and the historicity of biblical stories. Of the two the most important is the former, as much of the latter is in fact an attempt to validate revelation.

Paine did not deny revelation, as a believer in a god he had to admit

its possibility. However, he did make against it the simple, but devastatingly destructive point that revelation was only such to the recipient, to all others it was hearsay. "To put faith in it is not to put faith in God but in the man", Paine writes, "from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or he may have dreamed it, or he may be an impostor and may lie". There is no possible criterion whereby to judge the truth of what he tells, for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation."

The force of Paine's argument was not lost upon his opponents, for to destroy revelation you destroy along with it the authority of the Church and that with which it vests others. The whole structure of Christianity, as Karl Barth shows, rests on revelation.

The destruction of church authority achieved by Paine, reduced Christianity to the level of but a philosophy and nothing more. This is the theoretical position of many leading theologians of the present day; aware of the impossibility of demonstrating the historicity of the New Testament stories they have adopted a policy of demythology, a process which some Christian observers see as not only throwing out the baby with the bathwater but the bath as well. The end product of all this is to make Christianity representative of an attitude towards life and the world, as against its original dogmatic authoritarianism.

Here we arrive at two significant contributions Paine introduced into theological debate, and which gave The Age of Reason a lasting significance; first, the appeal to science; second, the democratic spirit displayed. Throughout The Age of Reason there are frequent references and appeals to science, particularly astronomy, to get points across. Science in Paine's day was seen in terms of its being compatible with holy writ; Paine adopted a position completely at variance with this and his use of science becomes a radical departure from the general attitude prevalent at that period in time. It is well to remember that specific biblical claims were looked on as established scientific facts, thus the age of the earth was computed from the Bible and the generally accepted date arrived at incorporated as late as 1701 into the margins of Bishop William Lloyd's edition of the Bible, there to remain uncontested for almost two centuries.

Likewise with geology. The advance of geological knowledge was greatly retarded by, among other things, the notion of a universal deluge derived from the Bible.⁴ The bitter controversies of the early 19th. century between the catastrophists (who held that in geological history there had been a number of successive epochs - of which the latest was that of Noah - during which there were major upheavals leading

the destruction of all life and after an interval the world was restocked with a new assemblage of animal and plant life) and the uniformitarians (who held that the world as we see it is the product of steady, slow processes), the former being represented by a number of clerical geologists such as Buckland, Sedgwick and Conybeare, while the latter were led by Lyell, Geike, and Scrope. Well has Zittel commented on geology in Britain when he wrote: ".....there more than in any other country, theological doctrines always effected geological conceptions." It was in such an atmosphere that Paine used science against religion, a truly revolutionary step.

The frantic efforts to make science conform to scripture failed and it was Paine's approach which eventually won out, though many years after his death. His approach was reflected in the steady increase and influence of biblical and social criticism. Theologians were forced to take cognizance of the abyss between traditional theology and what modern had to accept from their scientific and other enquiries, and realise that it could not be bridged by trickery or pretending no such differences existed. Thus they were forced back on the defensive. The triumph of science owes no small credit to the work of Paine, it owes him a debt of gratitude as yet largely unrepaid.

Paine, as we have seen, saw all men as equals. His concept of society was one run along co-operative lines. He rejected without qualification a state patterned along New Testament lines in which each individual had his or her divinely appointed place, and which looked for a post mortem solution to human problems. The Duchess of Buckingham, who we have already quoted, might speak of the working class becoming "tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their Superiors", or the hymn writer sing of

"A rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate,

"God made them high and lowly, and ordered their estate."

but the class on which they looked down was waking up, and under the influence of Paine's great works was rejecting a concept of society which relegated the great mass of people to the status of animals to be used only to enable a small group to live in the lap of luxury.

Paine appealed to reason, his ultimate cause was a democratic system of society. His spirit stands in glaring contrast to that of the politico-religious dictators who lorded it over most nations when he wrote, and who have their counterparts today in dictators such as Franco, who destroyed the liberties of the Spanish people, and the latter-day Al Capones who sit astride the backs of the Greek people.

The Age of Reason was influential because it made its case out in an easy to understand manner, if you like a journalistic style. It struck at authoritarian religion, but it was not an anti-religious work. The only authority Paine accepted was that of reason, thus in the last analysis each and every individual had to arrive at his own distinctive religious philosophy by his own efforts. The Age of Reason is fundamentally a democratic treatise, therein lies its strength, likewise its relevance for today. Paine spoke out in the interests of ordinary men and woman against a politico-religious ruling class; the response was initially slow but gained momentum. Paine's words had a quality of sincerity that moved men deeply. They inspired men to action; they still retain that quality.

Notes

1. E.P.Thompson. The Making of the English Working Class (1968), pp.48-49.
2. The Dynamics of Religion (1897), p.197.
3. J.H.Whiteley. Wesley's England (1938), p.328.
4. W.N.Edwards. The Early History of Palaeontology (1967), p.11.
5. Buckland later modified his position, though not as fully as L.K.Clark maintains in his Pioneers of Prehistory in England (1961), pp.90-91.
6. Lyell was a strong supporter of South Place Ethical Chapel when it was under the leadership of Dr.Moncure Conway, author of the best study of Paine's life yet published. See S.K.Ratcliffe, The Story of South Place (1955), pp.44-45. Geikie on the other hand never seems to have grown out of his father's somewhat dull nonconformist views, his father having been an official of the Argyle Square Chapel, Edinburgh. See Life of W.Lindsay Alexander by J.Ross (1887), p.195.
7. Quoted by J.W.Judd in his book The Coming of Evolution (1910), p.31.

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STANZAS,

Written on reading in an American newspaper an account of the death of Thomas Paine, author of Common Sense, Rights of Man, etc. By Alexander Rodger (1784 - 1846).

Tom Paine is dead - Satan, be on thy guard;
Remember, he's thy most inveterate foe;
Get thy strong Pandemonian gates well barr'd,
Nor let him enter thy dark realms below.

Else if thou do, prepare to meet thy fate,
Nor longer vainly boast of being king,
But quit thy throne - throw off thy robes of State,
Thy crown and sceptre from thee quickly fling.

For if his levelling doctrines once get ground,
Thy sooty subjects will in fact rebel,
Pull down thy throne, spread Deism around,
Chop off thy head, and make a FRANCE of Hell.

Alexander Rodger was born at the village of East-Calder, Midlothian, on July 16, 1784, his father was a farmer but later moved to Edinburgh where the family broke up. Following this "Sandy" went to live in Glasgow where he was apprenticed as a weaver.

Rodger became associated with working-class radical politics, writing political squibs for a journal called The Spirit of the Union. Shortly after joining the staff of the journal the editor was charged with sedition, found guilty, and sentenced to transportation for life. "Sandy", also went to prison, being convicted of "revolutionary practices". The unfortunate editor was Gilbert McLeod.

Rodger led an active political life after release, though he had to leave his journalism and return to his trade of weaving, however, he obtained the post of inspector of printed cloth in a local works. Later he tried his hand at pawnbroking and eventually back to journalism as reader and assistant reporter of local news for the Glasgow Chronicle. He followed this with a post on the Liberator, and then the Reformers Gazette. He died on September 26, 1846.

Rodger often recalled, with some amusement, the time when his home was searched for seditious publications. "Sandy" handed the Sheriff's Officer, who was making the search, the family Bible as a treasonable work and referred him to the chapter on Kings in 1st.Samuel.

A N E S S A Y O N W O M E N ' S
R I G H T S

by

Thomas Paine

During 1968 celebrations were held throughout Britain recalling the partial success women achieved in 1918 in obtaining the vote. As a contribution to the celebrations we reprint Paine's important article concerning women's rights which originally appeared in The Pennsylvania Magazine in 1775.

IF WE TAKE A survey of ages and countries, we shall find the women, almost - without exception - at all times and in all places, adored and oppressed. Man, who has never neglected an opportunity of exerting his power, in paying homage to their beauty, has always availed himself of their weakness. He has been at once their tyrant and their slave.

Nature herself, in forming beings so susceptible and tender, appears to have been more attentive to their charms than to their happiness, continually surrounded with griefs and fears, the women more than share all our miseries, and are besides subjected to ills which are peculiarly their own. They cannot be the means of life without exposing themselves to the loss of it; every revolution which they undergo, alters their health, and threatens their existence. Cruel distempers attack their beauty - and the hour which confirms their release from those is perhaps the most melancholy of their lives. It robs them of the most essential characteristic of their sex. They can then only hope for protection from the humiliating claims of pity, or the feeble voice of gratitude.

Society, instead of alleviating their condition, is to them the source of new miseries. More than one half of the globe is covered with savages; and among all these people women are completely wretched. Man, in a state of barbarity, equally cruel and indolent, active by necessity, but naturally inclined to repose, is acquainted with little more than the physical effects of love; and, having none of those moral ideas which only can soften the empire of force, he is led to consider it as his supreme law, subjecting to his despotism those whom reason had made his equal, but whose imbecility betrayed them to his strength. "Nothing" (says Professor Miller, speaking of the women of barbarous nations) "can

exceed the dependence and subjection in which they are kept, or the toil and drudgery which they are obliged to undergo. The husband, when he is not engaged in some warlike exercise, indulges himself in idleness, and devolves upon his wife the whole burden of his domestic affairs. He disdains to assist her in any of those servile employments. She sleeps in a different bed, and is seldom permitted to have any conversation or correspondence with him."

The women among the Indians of America are what the Helots were among the Spartans, a vanquished people, obliged to toil for their conquerors. Hence on the banks of the Oroonoko, we have seen mothers slaying their daughters out of compassion, and smothering them in the hour of their birth. They consider this barbarous pity as a virtue.

"The men" (says Commodore Byron, in his account of the inhabitants of South-America) "exercise a most despotic authority over their wives, whome they consider in the same view they do any other part of their property, and dispose of them accordingly. Even their common treatment of them is cruel; for though the toil and hazard of procuring food lies entirely on the women, yet they are not suffered to touch any part of it till the husband is satisfied; and then he assigns them their portion, which is generally very scanty, and such as he has not a stomach for himself."

Among the nations of the East we find another kind of despotism and dominion prevail - the Seraglio, and the domestic servitude of women, authorized by the manners and established by the laws. In Turkey, in Persia, in India, in Japan, and over the vast empire of China, one half of the human species is oppressed by the other.

The excess of oppression in those countries springs from the excess of love.

All Asia is covered with prisoners, where beauty in bondage awaits the caprices of a master. The multitude of women there assembled have no will, no inclinations but his. Their triumphs are only for a moment; and their rivalry, their hate, and their animosities continue till death. There the lovely sex are obliged to repay even their servitude with the most tender affections; or, what is still more mortifying, with the counterfeit of an affection, which they do not feel. There the most gloomy tyranny has subjected them to creatures, who, being of neither sex, are a dishonour to both. There, in short, their education tends only to debase them; their virtues are forced; their very pleasures are involuntary and joyless; and after an existence of a few years - till the bloom of youth is over - their period of neglect commences, which is long and dreadful. In the temperate latitude where the climates,

giving less ardor to passion, leave more confidence in virtue, the women have not been deprived of their liberty, but a severe legislation has, at all times, kept them in a state of dependence. One while they were confined to their own apartments, and debarred at once from business and amusement; at other times, a tedious guardianship defrauded their hearts, and insulted their understandings. Affronted in one country by polygamy, which gives them their rivals for their inseparable companions; enslaved in another by indissoluble ties, which often join the gentle to the rude, and ...sensitivity to brutality. Even in countries where they may be esteemed most happy, constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods, robbed of freedom of will by laws, the slaves of opinion, which rules them with absolute sway, and construes the slightest appearances into guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges, who are at once tyrants and their seducers, and who, after having prepared their faults, punish every lapse with dishonour - nay, usurp the right of degrading them on suspicion! Who does not feel for the tender sex? Yet such, I am sorry to say, is the lot of women over the whole earth. Man with regard to them, in all climates, and in all ages, has been either an insensible husband or an oppressor; but they have sometimes experienced the cold and deliberate oppression of pride, and sometimes the violent and terrible tyranny of jealousy. When they are not beloved they are nothing; and, when they are, they are tormented. They have almost equal cause to be afraid of indifference and of love. Over three-quarters of the globe nature has placed them between contempt and misery.

Even among people where beauty received the highest homage we find men who would deprive the sex of every kind of reputation. "The most virtuous women," says a celebrated Greek, "is she who is least talked of." That morose man, while he imposes duties upon women, would deprive them of the sweets of public esteem, and in exacting virtues from them, would make it a crime to aspire at honour.

If a woman were to defend the cause of her sex, she might address him in the following manner:

"How great is your injustice? If we have an equal right with you to virtue, why should we not have an equal right to praise? The public esteem ought to wait upon merit. Our duties are different from yours, but they are not therefore less difficult to fulfil, or of less consequence to society: They are the fountains of your felicity, and the sweetness of life. We are wives and mothers. 'Tis we who form the union and cordiality of families. 'Tis we who soften the savage rudeness which considers everything as due to force, and which would involve man with man in eternal war. We cultivate in you that humanity which makes you feel for the

misfortunes of others, and our tears forewarn you of your own danger. Nay, you cannot be ignorant that we have need of courage less than you. More feeble in ourselves, we have perhaps more trials to encounter. Nature assails us with sorrow, law and custom press us with constraint, and sensibility and virtue alarm us with their continual conflict. Sometimes also the name of citizen demands from us the tribute of fortitude. When you offer your blood to the State think that it is ours. In giving it our sons and our husbands we give more than ourselves. You can only die on the field of battle, but we have the misfortune to survive those whom we love most. Alas! while your ambitious vanity is unceasingly labouring to cover the earth with statues, with monuments, and with inscriptions to eternize, if possible, your names, and give yourselves an existence, when this body is no more, why must we be condemned to live and die unknown? Would that the grave and eternal forgetfulness be our lot. Be not tyrants in all: Permit our names to be sometimes pronounced beyond the narrow circle in which we live. Permit friendship, or at least love, to inscribe its emblem on the tomb where our ashes repose; and deny us not that public esteem which, after the esteem of one's self, is the sweetest reward of well doing."

All men, however, it must be owned, have not been equally unjust to their fair companions. In some countries public honours have been paid to women. Art has erected them monuments. Eloquence has celebrated their virtues, and history has collected whatever could adorn their character.

THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY

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A S T R O K E O F I M A G I N A T I O NBy Christopher Brunel.

AS A BRITISH institution the public house has survived such varied adversaries as temperance propagandists and television. Whether in a sophisticated city or an unpretentious country pub, one can find relaxation there - and the paradox is that there is also a great deal to stimulate one as well, (even excluding what one drinks!). People feel free to talk their minds in a British pub, and, if like Thomas Paine, you have a good ear for what men and women say about the affairs of the world, you can get it there.

Some social historian ought to dig the rich veins that I feel sure are to be discovered in our pubs, especially in their contribution to the struggles for freedom. Paine's followers during the days of the hysterical opposition to ideas of liberty at the end of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries often found a friendly landlord, who would let them meet, discuss and drink a few toasts to the rights of man, to the liberty of the press and to so much that we today (almost) take for granted.

It is for these reasons that I echo our President Michael Foot's verdict on the decision of Watney Mann (East Anglia) Ltd., to call a new pub of theirs in Paine's birthplace, Thetford, 'Rights of Man' a stroke of imagination. Doubly imaginative, in fact, to get Michael Foot to perform the opening ceremony and draw the traditional first pint of beer.

Mr. Foot was introduced at the ceremony by the local director of Watney Mann (East Anglia), Mr. L. R. Canham, who said that the house was the result of a great deal of hard work, effort and imagination by a team of people. When I visited the site at Brandon Road towards the end of 1967, I saw the foundations and a foot or two of brick wall - and heard from the foreman builder some of the problems in keeping out the water of the nearby Little Ouse that somehow got into the diggings.

Now there is a most pleasing single-story building that fits delightfully into the flat countryside of East Anglia. The decor features a large number of reproductions of Paine's works and printed material about him, which are especially well-chosen in the Tom Paine lounge bar - I hope to study them in greater detail on another occasion.

I want also to study more carefully the inn sign that was painted by Mr. E. Newsome and sign-writers in the Architects' Department of the brewery; it shows a group of reformers, carrying a banner, inscribed 'Rights of Man', and it has the true flavour of the times of the struggle for liberty. If I am not mistaken, it is based on a contemporary print - it looks familiar to me, but the source eludes me (it is based on a "Criss of London" print - ed.).

Perhaps, when the weather improves with the Spring, a visit of Society members can be organised to visit Thetford's 'Rights of Man', as well as the other associations with Paine in the town. I take this opportunity of flying this kite, and hope members will write to the Secretary with their ideas for this. I am sure that the landlord, Mr. A. L. Goldstone and Mrs. Goldstone will make us welcome.

But to return to the opening, I was delighted at the way the Thomas Paine Society was given honoured guest treatment. Our President rose magnificently to the occasion

with a brief sketch of Paine's life and his greatest work, Rights of Man. "Every time I hear his name," Mr. Foot said, "I have a glow of English pride. Some may think this is an exaggerated claim, but, if the test of a great man is how far-seeing he can be about the world in which he lives, and how he assists in liberating human ways, then I believe this claim is justified."

Rights of Man, he continued, was the greatest democratic manifesto in the English language, and it had a bigger sale than any other book in its time, except the Bible. Michael Foot, not being in Harold Wilson's Cabinet, may not have known of the current plans to reform the House of Lords, else he would have been tempted to quote extracts from Rights of Man on hereditary office-holders and legislators - there is always something topical about Paine's writings.

The local public library - always keenly aware of Paine being born and bred in Thetford - put on an excellent little exhibition from their marvellous collection of Paine material. Most of this comes from the late Ambrose G. Barker's collection, which Miss Ella Twynam donated to Thetford, and their selection was most apt to the occasion. The exhibits contained a number of editions of Rights of Man - and I particularly noticed how these drew the attention of one of the specially invited guests, Henry Collins. A great admirer of Paine, Mr. Collins has written the introduction to the Pelican edition of Rights of Man, that is due to be published in 1969.

Also in the exhibition was the very rare edition of part of The Age of Reason, published in Paris for M. Chateau in 1803, consisting only of Paine's Essay on Dreams. What nobody can have realised, bearing in mind the occasion, is that this contains Paine's warning about excess drinking.

Our President, our Society, and I, were made to feel very much at home at Thetford's 'Rights of Man'. The kindness of the organisers of the event will, I know, be repaid many times over in visits by members to the pub in Brandon Road, while at the same time we bear in mind Paine's reminder that "long and habitual intemperance" often injures the brain!

A CAPTION CARD IN THE SCIENCE MUSEUM, LONDON.

IRON BRIDGE OVER THE WEAR, 1796.

After the Coalbrookdale Bridge, the most important cast iron bridge was that erected over the river Wear at Sunderland.

It was constructed, with some modifications, according to a design by Thomas Paine, author of "The Rights of Man". Paine intended it to span the river Schuylkill in America and although the castings were made and assembled in Paddington, London, he gave up the project in order to go to Paris when the French Revolution broke out.

When erected over the Wear the bridge spanned 236ft.; the springing from the stone abutments was 95ft. above the bed of the river and there was a rise of 34ft. above the springing.

It was regarded for many years as a great triumph in the building of iron bridges and lasted until 1929 when it was replaced. These two illustrations show the bridge before and after completion in 1796.

J O S E P H _ L E W I S .

It is with deep regret that we learn of the death in the United States of Joseph Lewis.

Joseph Lewis was a Founder Member and first Vice-President of the Thomas Paine Society. A devoted worker in the defence of Paine and his work, Joseph Lewis was Founder and Secretary of the Thomas Paine Foundation of America, the organisation which erected statues of Paine in Paris, Morristown and Thetford. He edited The Age of Reason Magazine. A full obituary will appear in our next issue.

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