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and  
Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society



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## AN APPRECIATION OF RICHARD CARLILE

Described as "a funeral sermon", this address was given at the Hall of Science, City Road, London, on February 26, 1845, following Carlile's death, one of whose greatest legacies was his defeat of the ban on Paine's works. Mrs. Emma Martin (1812-1851) was an outstanding freethinker and unrecognised pioneer of women's liberation. She lectured throughout Britain, often under decidedly difficult circumstances, and was the author of several valuable freethought works. She was also a strong opponent of capital punishment, against which she campaigned. This article has been reproduced directly from a copy of the rare original pamphlet in the possession of a member of the TPS.

"Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price."—Psalm xliiv. 12.

THE mouldering pillars of church and state have long supported a fabric of injustice and oppression, under whose dense shade intolerance and vice have triumphed, and from which virtue, and freedom, and peace have been exiled.

It is true, we have not been without warm hearts, and honest tongues, and ready pens, to battle with our tyrants; and even in the prospect of the felons' bar, and the prison's solitary gloom, to tell them, that, "their *evil* is not *good*."

Yet those valiant struggles, and even our most brilliant success, has been dimmed with the recollection that our warriors are no more,—“their sun is gone down while it is yet day,” and we have in bitterness exclaimed to our rulers (whose *true* glory can only be derived from the happiness of their people) in words borrowed from the grand engine of their tyranny:—

“Thou sellest thy people for nought,” while we have added, with no slight satisfaction and hope, but thou “dost not increase thy wealth by their price.”

There was a time in England's history, when its feudal

tenures permitted the sale of the serf, together with the land on which he toiled ; but the principles of natural freedom rebelled against, and finally overthrew that despotism ; and honoured be the remembrance of the men who brought about this enfranchisement of the body, and confounded the distinctions of serf and baron—of lord and slave. There is a nobler freedom which the present generation has to gain,—a more perfect and glorious Magna-Charta awaits its efforts. The slavery of the body is enough of evil, but how much more galling the slavery of the mind ! not indeed that it is possible for kings, even when assisted by priests, to fetter universally the free thoughts—to prevent the calm inquiry ; but even to limit the *expression* of those thoughts—to prevent the *communication* of the *results* of our inquiries, is an exercise of lawless power, which, however necessary to the existence of the church or state, is as insulting to the intelligence of the age, as it is subversive of truth and virtue. Free inquiry lay bound, like Prometheus, to the rock of bigotry, with the vulture, law, ever ready to prey upon its vitals. The golden apples of reason were guarded by the hundred-eyed dragon of intolerance, till a moral Hercules arose and said, not so much in words as in acts—“ The press *shall* be free !”

That, to so great an enterprise he should have brought none of the usual appliances, and yet should have accomplished so much, must command our admiration of his heroism, and excite our faith in the *invincible* nature of *truth*,—that truth, the mother of freedom, which was his only sword and shield. Neither the money, which seems so necessary in an attack upon venal power and *time-hallowed* errors, nor the literary talents which appear indispensable to combat the *learned* doctors of divinity and law, nor the popular eloquence by which the people may be stirred to unite in so holy a warfare, and thus to assist those who wish to work out their salvation,—none of these advantages did he, at the outset of his career, possess ; yet, nothing daunted, he went forward honestly, consistently, and valiantly towards the desired end. That end was the

establishment of true civil and religious liberty; for what nation can dare to boast of these rights for its people, when the bridle of authority is placed upon the tongue and pen?—when, to urge the necessity of improvement in its government, is called sedition; and in its religion, is denominated blasphemy; and each are visited with grievous punishments.

He set about the attainment of this desirable object in earnest, sparing no labour, and shrinking from no sacrifice; he conquered the law by enduring its inflictions, and by patient perseverance, accomplished what talent or influence could not alone have ever effected.

Wrapped in the darkness of superstition, and consequently of ignorance, it is not difficult to persuade a people that it is for their interest and happiness, present and future, that the voice of the sceptical reasoner should not be heard in the land; and passive obedience and unreasoning faith become elevated to the rank of virtues.

There never was a religion whose books—whose sybil leaves were not too *sacred* for the prying eye of the investigator; that which could never be reconciled to the cool calculations of reason, was always affirmed, by priestly teachers, to be above and superior to it; and wherever that which was *known*, was in contradiction to that which was to be *believed*, then was it declared that “the things which were unseen were most deserving our regard, for they were eternal;” and “the wisdom of this world” was affirmed to be “foolishness with God.”

In vain was it urged to those whose apparent interest lay in the perpetuation of the popular delusions, that if the glorious attribute of reason was the gift of God, he never could have sent to us a commandment, or a truth, on which that ever-busy questioner may not exercise itself; and further, if HE has not prohibited our investigations, *they* do him but little honour, who, trembling for *his* religion, and distrustful of *his* power, should with their

“ Weak and erring hand  
Presume *his* bolts to throw,  
And deal damnation round the land,  
On each *they* judge *his* foe.”

But common sense, philosophy, and nature, lift up their voice in vain, when the all-powerful interests of a dominant class lie on the side of error.

The clergy, who drew large revenues from the people, by working upon their fears, and pandering to their hopes,—and the aristocracy, who looked to “*orders*” as a neat provision for the younger members of their families,—and the state, who knew well the value of their spiritual jackalls, were all equally interested in prohibiting officious tongues and pens from too rigid an inquiry into things hitherto deemed sacred by the deluded masses ; and scarcely could they fear any change in the popular tone, when they had succeeded in sanctifying ignorance, and making all objectors to their nostrums things to be feared and hated, when they had frightened freedom’s self, by attaching fines and imprisonment (often but the prelude to lingering death) as the penalty of disbelief.

The publication of works of a seditious or blasphemous character, which the laws had designated as so flagrant a crime, and which it had determined to punish so malignantly, was the head and front of Richard Carlile’s offending ; it was for this that he was “*sold to oppression, to prison, and to judgement.*” The truth of the accusation, “*Thou sellest thy people for nought,*” (for no crime) was never more distinctly seen than in the prosecutions for sedition and blasphemy which have occurred within the last half century.

Are either religion or government sciences in which no further discoveries can be made, more than any of the other branches of human knowledge ? Can no *improvement* take place in either ? Shall there be no more revolutions, or restorations, or reformations ? Shall they alone be stationary amidst perpetual change ? If God gave to man *both* the Christian *and* the Jewish religions “*which I know not, nor believe,*” he has him-

self set the example of improving religion to suit the advanced intelligence of the race. How, then, dare those who *do* believe that to have been the case, endeavour to place the barrier of positive institution to arrest our onward progress.

But, to establish that which is better, we must expose the faults we can discover in that which exists; to manifest truth, we must lift the veil of error which has obscured it; are they, then, guilty of a crime who make a rigid examination into those subjects for which our veneration has been so much demanded?—No! and the remembrance of those men shall be sacred in the hearts of their posterity, when the institutions they have attacked are crumbling in the dust of oblivion, or are loaded with the execration of mankind.

The disproportion between the crime of venturing to speak our thoughts—albeit the sound should be unwelcome—and the punishment it involved roused many to inquire into subjects which otherwise would for them have rested still; and a suspicion has naturally been excited that there must be some reasons for so much vengeance other than those which were avowed. The result of their reasonings was the conclusion that “the people were sold for *nought*.”

It was also for *nought*, if the probable injury likely to accrue from the spread of infidelity be considered. Her Majesty’s proclamation against blasphemy and immorality, made in every criminal court at its opening, presumes that infidelity and immorality ever accompany each other,—a mistake which its framers could *not* have fallen into themselves, but which they hoped the world *would* make.

If it could be proved that any set of principles led to *immorality* (not fancied, but real) in the lives of its professors, that would be a good reason why the teaching of such principles should be discountenanced; but who can, with truth, lay this to the charge of scepticism? On the contrary, it can easily be shown that morality can never have any sure foundation except

philosophy ; and philosophy can only triumph when *creeds* are overthrown. Even those who have not mental energy sufficient to examine this subject philosophically, must, I should have thought, have discovered the falsehood of the popular notion,—that orthodoxy in the *creed* tended to the establishment of virtue in the *life*,—for even *they* seem capable of looking round the world, and learning the great lessons of its past experience ; and no one of those lessons is more decided than that which would be the antipodes of the notion in question.

It cannot, then, be from solicitude for the public morals that such heavy punishments have been awarded to the advocates for the right of free discussion ; for not only are these not endangered, but true morality must, by such means, be placed on the sure basis of science and reason, instead of resting on the ever-shifting sands of religious faiths.

“ They have sold their people for *nought*,” when their own motives are considered. The price looked for by them was not in reality that for which their anxiety was expressed. The good of the people—the promotion of virtue—and even the advancement of piety, were equally left out of their calculations, except in semblance ; for well must they have known, even with their surface-reading of the book of humanity, how little such effects were to be produced from such causes.

No ; the price which they secretly put upon the people was (*was?*—*nay, is*) that splendour and influence which wealth so abundantly provides for its lawless possessors. The children of larger growth, dazzled with the external grandeur which makes a *show* of happiness, but has not its substance, thought that they had a good price for the people, whom they sold to dishonour, imprisonment, and death, if by such means they were able to retain their misused power.

But what is the value of such distinctions, if disgust attend their possession ? What, though the gilded



chariot should bear its possessor through awe-struck thousands? What, though the puppet-king shall ride a career of uncaring despotism over the necks of prostrate and starving millions? True happiness forswears the palace where virtue is unhonoured, nor visits the stately mansion where benevolence has not taken up her abode: they have lost the rewards which a pure heart and ready hand might have procured. What are the empty titles, the gaudy decorations, which they thought might have supplied their place, and to retain which they were willing to "sell" those who wished to rectify the popular taste—to correct the popular ignorance?

If they had gained all their price—all the price of the liberty and lives of their victims—still its value was nought in reality, though specious in appearance. But even that, valueless as it is, cannot be secured long under so great oppression. "National glory," and "glorious constitutions," and "priestly" and "kingly dignities" are finding their true level, in the opinion of the people; and they who have sold them may perhaps learn, too late, that those who "sow the wind" must expect but "to reap the whirlwind."

And to *what* were the people sold?

To that contumely and reproach which should be the punishment of vice alone. There are minds which can face all the horrors of law,—who would never shrink from the daring which the invincible struggler for human rights should possess, who will start from the scorn of the public voice. It requires no small degree of courage to persist in the course once adopted, when the many-tongued people shall be almost unanimous in condemnation. How conscious must the moral warrior be of the rectitude of his motives; of the truth of his principles; of their importance to the very men who, in the spirit of the fanatics of a former time, cried "Crucify him—crucify him!"—and how much must the true interests of the world be, in his estimation, superior to petty individualisms, to prevent his stagger-

ing in his high resolves, and giving up the apparently unequal contest!

How little do *they* seek the welfare of a nation who misdirect so powerful a stimulus, or restraint, as the popular reproach, until it ceases to be the test of the excellent or worthless; and is alone to be regarded as the thermometer of the principles or practices which<sup>r</sup> are in good repute, only because they serve, or seem to serve, the cause of venal power and authorized oppression!

They are not only sold thus to calumny and reproach, but lawless villany has no bounds set to its malignity, when the victim is the advocate of human rights. It has recently been decided by a magisterial worthy\* of this metropolis (the *metropolis* of the most *enlightened* nation of the world), that, should an aristocratic *brute*, excited by an attack upon the prejudices of his babyhood, set all law at defiance, and commit injuries upon person or property, his *holy zeal* would do him "infinite honour."

Thus are our notions of honour and justice confounded, the distinction between vice and virtue destroyed, and a precedent in our own times given to impunity for the most barbarous acts, when the victim shall have rendered himself obnoxious—not by aristocratic vices—but by a plebeian love of truth. Nor have they stopped even here with this approval of lynch-law. The vengeance of deluded numbers, or individual spite, however recklessly indulged upon our advocates, was not enough to satisfy the demon thirst of bigotry.

The mockery of trial, at the felons' bar, has been followed by the lingering deaths of repeated imprisonments. Permit me, in Mr. Carlile's own words, to give a specimen of these legalized enormities.

"While at the mechanic's bench, in the year 1816, my first idea in politics was, that the printing press was not worked with sufficient courage, honesty, and freedom, for

\* Allusion is made to the case of Thomas Paterson. See note at the end.

the largest degree of public good, and that a little martyrdom arrayed against the official powers that would institute prosecutions, would set the press free from all official thraldoms.

“In the month of March, 1817, I began to vend the boldest publications of that day, at the moment when the ministers, Liverpool, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, had suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, and issued a circular to the magistracy, calling for the arrest and prosecution of every one selling such publications. I found the London trade in such pamphlets paralyzed by that ministerial circular; so, against its workings I worked, to encourage the trade to renew the sale. In this I succeeded; my unchecked example became the encouragement of others, and before the end of that year there was a greater freedom of the press, and the sale of its produce, than had before been known in England.

“The Parodies on the Book of Common Prayer cost me eighteen weeks’ imprisonment in the King’s Bench Prison, from which I was liberated, without trial, on the acquittal of William Hone.

“At that moment, then twenty-seven years of age, married, and the parent of two children, I had not conceived any errors in the article *religion*; but I soon discovered that the suppressed writings chiefly related to religion. This fact gave me the first idea of errors in the religion of the people. Robert Owen had just then made his public appearance, proclaiming that there were errors in all the religions of the earth. I had been charged by the Attorney-General, in his prosecution for the publication of the Parodies, with being profane and irreligious; but the accusation was false—no young man could stand more acquit of such a character.

“By the end of the year 1818, I had published the Theological Works of Thomas Paine, which had been suppressed through twenty years. Prosecutions were immediately instituted, which had no other effect than to induce me to go on printing other similar works, such as the ‘Doubts of Infidels,’ ‘Watson Refuted,’ Palmer’s Principles of Nature,’ ‘The God of the Jews,’ &c., &c. By the month of October, 1819, I had at least six indictments pending against me; and the sale of my publications so large as to produce a profit of fifty pounds per week. Two of the indictments were tried, from the 12th to the 16th of October, and verdicts obtained against me. I was committed to the King’s Bench Prison, and on the 16th of

November sentenced to fifteen hundred pounds fine, and three years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol. In the dead of the night I was handcuffed, and driven off between two armed officers to Dorchester, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles.

"The first thing I did, at the close of my trial, was to print the 'Age of Reason,' in twopenny sheets, as part of the report of the trial, having taken care to read the whole in defence. Of these I sold more in a month than of the volumes in a year. For this publication, a prosecution was instituted against Mrs. Carlile, but was dropped on her declining the sale. She was not however long unmolested.

"Under pretence of seizing for my fines, the sheriff, with a writ of *levari facias*, from the Court of King's Bench, took possession of my house, furniture, stock in trade, and closed the shop. It was thus held, from the 16th of November to the 24th of December, that rent became due, and then emptied."

"Under my desire Mrs. Carlile renewed a business, in January, 1820, with what could be scraped together from the unseized wreck of our property. In February she was arrested; but the first indictment failed through a flaw in the verdict. She was immediately proceeded against by the Attorney-General, and became my fellow-prisoner in Dorchester Gaol in February, 1821, after having done good service in the shop for a year.

"My sister succeeded my wife in the management of the business, but was also immediately prosecuted. The first indictment failed in this case, by the honesty of one of the jurymen. In the second, the judge (Best) suppressed the defence. By the month of November, 1821, my sister was also a prisoner in Dorchester Gaol, with a fine of five hundred pounds.

"In the course of the year 1821, a new association had been formed, called the 'Constitutional Association,' for a subscription to pay the expenses of prosecuting the assistants of my business. Six thousand pounds were subscribed, and the Duke of Wellington disgraced his name by putting it, with his money, at the head of the list. My sister's trial was the first check it received. The unsuccessful prosecution of Thomas Dolby, the second. Then came a batch of my assistants to the encounter: to wit, Susanna Wright, George Beer, John Barkley, Humphrey Boyle, Joseph Rhodes, William Holmes, and John Jones. All these, save Jones, sustained terms of imprisonment,

from six months to two years; but they succeeded in breaking down the 'Constitutional Association.'

"Then came James Watson and William Tunbridge, both meeting imprisonment.

"In the month of February, 1822, Mrs. Wright being then in possession of the house, the very week that Mr. Peel had taken possession of the Home Office, a second seizure was made of the house and stock of 55, Fleet-street, and the house finally wrested from me. This was done on the pretence of satisfying the fines; but neither from this nor the former seizure was a farthing allowed in the abatement of the fines, and I was detained in Dorchester Gaol to the end of the sixth year, three years' imprisonment having been taken in lieu of the fines.

"Joseph Trust was the only person prosecuted in 1823, and the Lord Chief Justice Abbott intimated that enough had been done; but in May, 1824, there came a new rage for prosecutions from the Government, when Charles Sanderson, Thos. Jefferies, William Haley, William Campion, Richard Hansell, Michael O'Connor, William Cochrane, John Clarke, John Christopher, and Thomas Riley Perry, were severally arrested, and the last nine imprisoned, through various periods, from six months to three years.

"Two years Mrs. Carlile was kept in Dorchester Gaol; so was my sister, a year having been taken for her five hundred pounds fine. After this it was reported that the Cabinet had, in council, acknowledged me invincible in the course of moral resistance which I had taken, and no more persons were arrested from my shop, while no one of my publications had been suppressed, and every year brought forth something more important than the former. By the month of June, 1824, in the fifth year of my imprisonment, according to my first calculation, I had accomplished the freedom of the press in England, such as was not before known in the world.

"My imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol was very strict and severe. The first magisterial order was, that I should be led into the open air only as a caged animal, to be exhibited to the gaze of the passing curious, half an hour each day, or an hour every other day, or as the gaoler may be pleased. This and similar orders caused me to pass two years and a half in my chamber, without going into the open air."

"In 1834 and 5, I passed ten weeks in the same Compter, for resistance to the payment of Church Rates; making my total of imprisonment nine years and four months."

And oh, England! thy crimes stop not here, "thou sellest thy people" even to death! It is true that the star-chamber is closed, and the fires of Smithfield have gone out; but as truly as they ever witnessed the sentence and death of martyrs, so truly have we done the same.

Do the lingering cheerless hours of prison solitude, and the long catalogue of prison privations, do nothing towards drying up the springs of life and abridging its duration? If the evidence lately given to the world, in the excellent work of Southwood Smith, produces its legitimate conviction on our minds, we shall admit that longevity and happiness, or the greatest sum of the most pleasurable emotions, accompany each other.

The effects of many and long-continued privations do not cease with their actual infliction; the nerves, shattered by solitude and suffering, do not so easily recover their tone; and though life may be for a short time continued, it will never recover the buoyancy of former times.

Richard Carlile bore, for a short time only, the evidences of the sacrifices of which he had not failed to offer the last item the law demanded; the wreck of his former being, alone, has he now borne with him to the quiet grave; but that premature grave shall be eloquent of his endurance and his wrongs. The years abridged from the sum of his life, shall tell a tale to other times, at which even religion herself shall learn to blush.

But if "the people have thus been sold for nought," it is consolatory to know that their tyrants "do not increase their wealth by the price." How stands the rotten fabric of superstition now, twenty-five years after his first campaign? Is it safer for the props which have been sought to be placed around it, by the prosecutions of its oppugners? Have the human agonies, endured in cold prison cells, cemented its stones more firmly? No! and humanity, reason, truth, exultingly re-echo, no!

The reign of mental darkness is drawing to a close,

and we may accost the genius of superstition in the language of our poet.

“*Aye!* now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs.  
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,  
Unhonoured and unpitied, save by those  
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,  
Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun  
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night,  
That long has lowered above the ruined world.”

SHELLEY.

The persecution of the sceptic's words have but given a new zest to investigation. The lightning shaft of intolerance, so far from blasting, has but rendered more quick and penetrating the eye of reason. The natural result of opposition to the voice of freedom, in such an age as this, is but to give to it a new impetus.

Gradually, but safely, will proceed the overthrow of despotism, whether existent in church or state, and every means used to arrest it, will but accelerate our journey to the goal of peace and happiness.

Let us refresh ourselves, amidst our recollections of human thralldom, with the evident progress which has already been made in the emancipation of the press and tongue, since the formation of *his* noble resolution, which has been as nobly kept.

It is true that bigotry has not yet exhausted its efforts — its death-struggles are even now occasionally violent — it still demands its martyrs, as prison walls, yet responding to the steps of incarcerated men can testify ;\*

\* Charles Southwell, just completing his term of 13 months' imprisonment (and one hundred pounds fine, since reduced to fifty) in Bristol gaol, for *blasphemy* in the “Oracle of Reason,” of which he was the projector and editor. George Jacob Holyoake, second editor of the “Oracle,” also enduring six months' imprisonment in Gloucester gaol for *blasphemy* uttered in a lecture at Cheltenham. And Thomas Paterson, third editor of the “Oracle,” who had just endured one month of FELONS' discipline, in the Middlesex house of correction, for exhibiting in his shop window a *blasphemous* placard.

but how much fainter are the efforts for the suppression of truth, how many lips are free to utter it—how many places are consecrate by its dissemination? It remains therefore a demonstrable fact, that if superstition, or *religion*, is their “wealth,” it has not been “increased” by the “price” which has been demanded of those who ventured to question the intrinsic value of that which they affirmed to be the “pearl of great price,” and which they recommended us to “sell all we had to obtain,” while for themselves, however beautiful in their eyes the gospel gem might be, they preferred it, all the world to nothing, when accompanied with a gorgeous setting.

Turn we now to another class. It is not the church and the state alone who sell their “people” for “nought;” the professedly liberal world is not guiltless of a fault so glaringly set up for its imitation. Too many are there, who, shrinking themselves from the arduous conflict, turn their backs upon the enemy, and leave a few, betrayed, or at least forsaken, to fight the great battle of *their* rights. The time-serving policy of many among them, creates a timidity which is the grand barrier in our path to complete enfranchisement; and produces an inconsistency, which greatly characterizes the machinery by which that regeneration must eventually be produced.

Few, comparatively, have the moral courage for which they would take credit. They are one thing to-day, and to-morrow, if the popular horizon looks lowering, they are another; and inconsistent they must ever be, if their actions are to be dictated by *expediency*, rather than guided by *principle*. Even the liberal portion of the press are equally open to this charge; the *Dispatch* one week says it does not *know* what Mr. Carlile’s opinions were, and thinks no one else does; and in the very next number declares—it always *disapproved* them! Now, if the truth was stated in the first instance, and his principles were really *unknown*, why were they always *repudiated*? Why? I will tell you, my friends,—because it was *fa-*



*shionable* to do so ; and because the supposed interests of the proprietors of that paper lay, not at all in *leading* the people on towards truth and freedom, but only in following a little in the rear :—they *follow* where they should *lead* ; and only follow, lest they should fall into contempt and neglect. This is the reason why the people, oppressed and sold, are sold for “ nought,” —that is, without effort on the part of those who should have been their defenders and friends ; or, if occasionally there should be a few wordy boasts, or a little expostulation, it dies away powerless ;—as it began without feeling, it expires without effect.

Whence arises this timidity in the liberal world at large, but from fears of their own safety ? It is to increase their individual security that they shrink from the contest, and thus sell their champions for “ nought :” —and equally true is it of this, as of the other class, they do not “ increase their wealth by the price ;” for if we should refuse to stand up nobly in defence of the truth, and of its advocates, *to-day*, we shall have the combat still awaiting us *to-morrow*. If our help should not be offered to the achievement of human emancipation, our children will have to overcome what our own energies should have destroyed. Oh ! let us never bequeath to them a badge of slavery, which we may, by our own industry and fortitude, remove.

Richard Carlile was, during the last two or three years of his life, discountenanced by a number of his former most zealous friends, on account of his supposed vacillation in the profession of apparently very different principles to those which had won for him their attachment ; and hence arose the lukewarmness which is known to have existed to a great extent. But this change was one in *appearance*, but none in reality. It was no change in the great object he had in view, but an alteration in the means by which he sought to bring it about. That those means would be ineffectual, and from their very nature must necessarily be so, many of us foresaw ; and we might further have been of opinion, that any attempt to reconcile fanati-

cism to philosophy was undesirable, even if it could be successful in gaining, for a time, the attention, or in softening the malignity of the "blind," who are drawn by their equally "blind leaders into the ditch." From that *ditch*, whenever reason's strong arm releases them, it can only be by compelling them to leave behind their long cherished delusions. If to humour them a little with their *toy* might have made them more tractable, it did not to us appear likely to lead them away from errors of which *that* was the chief—the *sacred* foundation. And time has shown that, by his late efforts to give such a complexion to his opinions as would less shock the prejudices of the world, he lost the co-operation of the majority of his common-sense friends, and gained none from among those for whose sake he made so complete a change, not in his general principles, but only in his *mode* of teaching them. It is known that I, in a discussion with Mr. Carlile, held in this place about two years ago, urged strong objections to a course which I considered so useless, if not replete with danger; but justice forbids that we should construe a defect in judgment, or matter of taste, into a crime; or that they should be used as reasons why he who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,"—whose endurance has bought us so much of liberty, should be denied the tribute of our gratitude and applause.

We may *now* forget the things in which we differed from him, and, though we cannot think that he was faultless, we may turn from minor points in which we may have discovered blemishes, to those leading features in his life, which have honoured him and advantaged us; and, if the projects of his later years were such as could not meet our approval; when his long seclusion from society is considered, it may, reasonably, be a matter of wonder that they were not more singular and impracticable than they were found to be.

Death has now drawn his curtain over the things of life,—the voice of envy will soon be hushed,—the

tongue of calumny mute as his own; for men will ever do that justice to the dead which they deny to the living. And, in the great revolution of popular sentiment and knowledge, 'which time is fast maturing,' the names of Wesley, Watts, and Whitfield shall excite no emotion, save one of laughter, or of pity. Nelson and Wellington, and their blood-stained victories, shall be things of which our children shall be ashamed, loaded, as they are, with the widow's curse, and with the orphan's tear. The wholesale butchery, called war, shall meet its deserved execration, and its heroes claim but the shudder and the sigh; while that of Carlile, linked as it is with the progress of liberty, shall be greeted with an esteem which shall but increase as intelligence advances.

And, think you, that death can ever annihilate the spirit which animated him in so dangerous and difficult an undertaking? No! The mantle of Elijah has fallen on us! That spirit lives within us, fostered by his example, nay, in many of us, born under his auspices; and, in this, perhaps, has been his greatest success—the leading on so many to assist in so glorious a task. If he could not have imbued others with the fire which burned in him so brightly, when he was "sold to prison and to judgment," the cause in which he toiled must have suffered a natural decay; but another, and another still, spurred by his example, offered themselves to all the consequences of their opposition to the "*might*" which sought to overcome "*right*."

There are some, who, on occasions like the present, would chiefly have directed your attention to another world, who would have pointed you to its hopes, its joys, and its rewards. I confess to you that mine are of a higher order than those for which the selfish religionist pants.

The supposed cheerless aspect of infidelity appals the minds trained to the exercise of unfounded hopes for future high-seasoned joys; and they prefer to toy, in imagination, with a heaven in expectance, to the enjoyment and improvement of the realities of the world

around them. Of what value is it, that we should be led on by the *ignis-fatuus* hope, if the chase must end in the bog of disappointment? The wise man will scarcely expend his strength in toiling for that which *may* never be possessed, while, at the same time, his utmost energies are no more than what is necessary to enable him to reach that which he *knows* to be attainable.

We are not without hope in the death of our friends, but those hopes are of a holy and benevolent character. We leave to those who think they can obtain it, a heaven, in which white robes, and golden harps, and crowns, and never-ceasing songs, are to be the prominent features; and we content ourselves with trying to make a heaven of earth, for the enjoyment of the human family, both now and through future generations. Our prayers are not poured forth for present or eternal happiness for ourselves or others, but our strenuous efforts (worth a thousand prayers) are used for the release of our race from a double slavery—that political and religious, which is the cherubim whose fiery sword, turning every way, would guard the Eden of our happiness from our approach, and bar the pathway to the tree of life,—that tree of knowledge, the life of the soul, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations.

To us, and to the world, death—even the martyr's death—shall furnish a lesson of the most salutary character. If we have not *lived* in vain, we cannot die without hope that around death itself the halo of usefulness shall be formed; and even this day, with the circumstances of its interment, will prove us right. Not only did the same consistency with which his life was honoured, characterize him in death, but he, being dead in the body, yet lives, and acts by means of the memory of his wishes and his sentiments. It was the infusion of his spirit, proceeding from the lips of his son (in this case proving himself worthy such a father), which refused to sanction to-day the formalities of a church he had at so much cost de-

nounced. And those who, when the insult of a funeral ceremony from priestly hands was persisted in, left the scene, which, though consecrated to the spirit of superstition, could not affect "the dull cold eye or ear of death," have performed an action suitable to him, and which will speak louder than words could do, how many steps have been taken towards rationality by no inconsiderable number of the present generation.

It may be that no mausoleum may be reared for him in the usual style of ostentatious mourning; but a monument (more enduring than marble) is already raised to him in the memory of the people. But not with this alone shall we be content; we must show the *world*, by a sympathy excited by this event, not so much how we admire the man, useful and brave though he has been, as how deeply we venerate, how unweariedly we will assist, the great cause in which he laboured.

If that labour, and the sufferings consequent upon it, have brought him to a martyr's grave, and thus taken an invaluable protection and support from that portion of his family who are yet dependent on the fostering care of others, we shall at least improve so sad a circumstance by showing that we can, and will, do something to repair a loss we cannot wholly supply.\*

In accordance with the ordinary expectation of human life, he should have survived to rear them to maturity; but since that life has been evidently curtailed by his efforts in our cause, who is there that has been brought out of the darkness of superstition into the light of truth, who will not feel it a justice to his principles, and a privilege he would not willingly relinquish, to be enabled, in some way equally honourable to himself and to the memory of the departed, to assist

\* The children referred to are three, under ten years of age.— It appears to me that a committee should be formed, whose business should be the obtainment of funds, and the judicious disposal of them, so that these children may be placed above the contingencies which may otherwise await them.

in the great, and in this case pleasing, though melancholy duty, of providing for the requirements of their childhood?

They are a legacy,—the only one their father could bequeath to you,—for he died in a poverty more honourable to him than a state of affluence could have been.

You will know how to dispose of such a legacy to your own credit and their advantage; and most happy shall I be to assist, by the exercise of whatever talents or influence I may possess, the advancement of such an object; for it is that by which we shall be able to demonstrate to the world, not only how many there are in this country who have embraced the principles of reason and philosophy, but that those principles have taught us their legitimate lesson, which is this:—

That to embody in our lives the best sentiments of those whom we esteem on account of their excellence, and to perform for them, if possible, the duties which death has prevented them from fulfilling, is more acceptable to the wise man, and more worthy in those who admire him, than expensive monuments, which oftener await the remains of the wealthy and the worthless, than those of the philanthropist, the philosopher, or the patriot.

## NOTE.

**BRUCE LAW.**—We are indebted to Mr. Knight Bruce, the son of the equity judge, for an example which, if generally followed, will relieve the public of many burdensome establishments, and will produce a complete revolution in society, restoring it to a state from which it may be said to have departed from the first date of civilization.

Mr. Knight Bruce, seeing something offensive in a shop window, takes the law into his own hands—the law in his hands being a stick—breaks the windows, and carries off the placard in triumph. The shopman, who had some obsolete notion that the property of every one was entitled to protection, took this virtuous young gentleman to Bow-street police-office, but the magistrate, the excellent Mr. Jardine, who knows better than any other justice living how to treat a gentleman, as Mr. Bankes can testify, instead of entertaining the complaint, extolled Mr. Bruce for his spirited act, and thanked him for the public service he had rendered. Truth is stranger than fiction.

Let us only proceed on the simple rule of taking the law into our own hands, and we shall never want subjects for our summary jurisdiction. An attack on the gaming-houses—aye, and the gaming-clubs too—would merit praise. There are divers other haunts not famed for virtue which might be pulled down, to the great honour of the assailants' zeal for morals—a thousand wrongs are daily done which might be summarily chastised—nay, the thing might be carried to the pitch of excellence of hanging some one at the lamp-posts now and then. The people did so in France when they took the law into their own hands. As for the magistrates, their function, or what might or should be their function, being transferred to the public in general, and to any one in particular having the whim to perform it, their business should be henceforth simply and solely to award the praise they think due to meritorious outrages. After a time the magistracy may be abolished altogether, and the money saved—but in the first working of the bruce-law, before the public have quite got into the right way of it, the magistrates may be useful in teaching the young idea of violence how to shoot, in training and directing outrage, in showing brute force *quid utile, quid non*.

As a bird in the hand is said to be worth two in the bush, so a stick in the hand should be rated as of more worth than any number of sticks on the bench. The symbol of justice, of old, was the bundle of rods—it is now single-stick. Bruce-law, then, for ever!—*Examiner*.

## THE VAN DER WEYDE-ROOSEVELT LETTERS

The following correspondence is presented to the reader as the first in a series of printings from the archives of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, and is offered for its historic and social interest. William van der Weyde's polite yet insistent approach to disabusing President Roosevelt of his mistaken views of Paine can be said to mirror the mission of the TPNHA's own research work. To their knowledge this is the first time that these letters have been formally published and we commend them to you now, both scholars and the public, for the light they shine on both the TPNHA's own history as well as the character of Theodore Roosevelt.

Aside from the historical interest, and the marvellous manner in which Van der Weyde finesses Roosevelt into replying, this correspondence also demonstrates some of the history of the slander campaign against Paine and its political and religious roots. When people could not defeat the ideas they attacked the man. The first attack on Paine's character came in March, 1776 when an outraged reverend, in an attempt to defeat the recently published Common Sense attacked the author's character when it was not even known who the author was. A series of personal slanders from Paine's political enemies has hounded his memory and legacy ever since, and historians to this day repeat the same nonsense that Roosevelt does in these letters, with the same lack of thought that Roosevelt evidenced.

Roosevelt's pernicious slander was popularised just at the time, in the 1880s when Paine was gaining some recognition again. It took 30 years to get Roosevelt to account for his baseless accusations, and it was done in the following letters. Roosevelt died four months after the last letter was written.

### FOREWORD BY WILLIAM VAN DER WEYDE

The correspondence between Colonel Roosevelt and myself on the subject of Thomas Paine is in the main so directly to the point that an explanatory foreword is hardly necessary. There are nevertheless some matters touched upon in these letters concerning which a few additional words will be of value.



In having the correspondence bound into book form for preservation I think it will be well to cover these points by a short introduction, and also, to briefly relate the history of Mr Roosevelt's famous characterization of Thomas Paine as a "filthy little atheist".

In 1888 first appeared Roosevelt's "Life of Gouverneur Morris", in which occurs his vehement and contemptuous denunciation of the great philosopher and libertarian. A storm of protest arose from admirers of Thomas Paine all over the world. Letters urging a retraction of the objectionable words reached Mr Roosevelt from all lands. Mr Roosevelt did not reply or retract. Magazines, newspapers and books quoted the unjust words and called upon the author for a withdrawal of his "three word slander". The future President of the United States was content to maintain silence. In 1899 when Mr Roosevelt was Governor of New York, a delegation visited Albany to try to induce him to retract. He refused to see his visitors. When, some years later Mr Roosevelt was President of the United States, another delegation journeyed to the White House with the same purpose in view. It was equally unsuccessful.

In the course of the thirty years that have elapsed between the original publication of the libel on Thomas Paine and Mr Roosevelt's death, many hundreds of letters reach him urging retraction.

Not until the present correspondence took place, could Mr Roosevelt be induced to break his long silence on the subject. A Mr Hartmann evoked the first letter. Then I took the matter up and the correspondence in this matter ensued. The correspondence comprises the only letters so far as I know that Mr Roosevelt has written upon this vital and extremely interesting subject, with the exception of a brief letter to his friend Owen Wister, dated September 20<sup>th</sup> 1901 in which Mr Roosevelt repeats about Paine in bed and alleges that "a swine in a sty was physically clean in comparison!"

I think I may fairly attribute the abrupt termination of our very polite correspondence to my letter of July 15, 1918, which presented rather conclusive evidence that Thomas Paine was not filthy, but was, instead, scrupulously neat and clean. Also I surmise that my correspondent did not appreciate my quotation to him of his own low estimate of Gouverneur Morris (an excerpt from his own biography of Morris); and I think besides that Mr Roosevelt perceived the futility of writing further on a subject concerning which he knew little and regarding which I apparently

knew much. In the very beginning of the correspondence Mr Roosevelt acknowledged that Paine was a Deist, not an Atheist; but he stubbornly persisted in the exactness otherwise of his characterization of Paine.

In his letter dated July 9<sup>th</sup> 1918 however, he retracts the "quotation" which he had alleged was from the journal of Gouverneur Morris and which he quoted in the letter to Mr Hartmann that brought about this correspondence. Being unable to substantiate it, Mr Roosevelt definitely says of his "quotation", that "he has made and shall make no further allusions to it and will not quote it". He added: "I have never used it in public and I have withdrawn the only two private quotations that I have made of it." As the two private quotations were presumably to me and to Mr Hartmann, I wrote to Mr Hartmann telling him of Mr Roosevelt's letter and asking if he had received a retraction from Mr Roosevelt. Mr Hartmann promptly replied saying that he had received no such retraction, nor any letter whatever from Mr Roosevelt.

Regarding the Jared Sparks assertion, quoted by Mr Roosevelt in the letter dated April 19<sup>th</sup> 1918 (where it is incorrectly ascribed to Morris) that Thomas Paine's habits and personality were so disagreeable to the Monroes while he was a guest at their home in Paris (1794-5), necessitating their excluding him from the family and sending his meals to his own apartment, the simple truth and historic fact is that Paine was extremely ill in the home of James Monroe (the U.S. Minister who succeeded Morris after the latter's recall from France) and that he was there tenderly nursed by Mrs Monroe herself who very kindly had the invalid's meals sent to his sick-room, he being unable to come downstairs.

In Mr Roosevelt's letter of July 1, 1918 he refers to Paine being "in reality a French citizen" not a citizen of the United States, entirely disregarding the fact that James Monroe claimed Paine as an American citizen when he demanded from the French Government - and secured - his release from the Luxembourg, into which he had been cast largely enough through the machinations of Morris, Paine's inveterate enemy. The same French decree (August 26, 1792), by the way conferred on Paine the complimentary title of French citizen, conferred the same title on George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Kosciuszko, Joseph Priestley, David Williams and a dozen others.

This allegation by Mr Roosevelt and a number of others that I might easily have controverted, I did not trouble to dispute because my subject

was solely whether or not Paine was "a filthy little Atheist". Mr Roosevelt having admitted that Paine was not an Atheist, I devoted my letters entirely to the question of his filthiness or cleanliness. I am sorry Mr Roosevelt has passed away without retracting fully and frankly his unwarranted slander of the great man who did so much in the founding of the United States of America, I am indeed not sorry for the sake of Thomas Paine. His fame is too secure to be injured by calumny and vituperation. It is for the sake and for the reputation of Mr Roosevelt that I have regrets.

**Letter from S.E. Hartmann of the Rationalist Press Association to Theodore Roosevelt, October 8, 1917:**

Theodore Roosevelt, Esq.  
Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y.

Dear Sir,

As to one of the distinguished citizens of the United States, although (sic) unknown, I am writing you this letter. Some days ago I passed 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and fourth (sic) Avenue and listened to one of the soap box orators who mentioned your name in a manner I must admit shocked me.

You will excuse the language but I am repeating what he said, word for word: "Theodore Roosevelt is the man who told three lies in three words, when he called Thomas Paine, "Dirty, little Atheist", first Thomas Paine was a very clean man, second he was six feet tall and third, he was a deist, for he wrote on the first page of his "Age of Reason", "I believe in one God and no more and I hope for future life."

Some days later it happened that I came to the same corner and a different soap-box orator assailed you with the same story. If the trouble is not to (sic) much will you be good enough to refute their statement as a mischievous (sic) lie.

I think that it is a shame these soap box orators are allowed to besmear (sic) the name and character of a citizen and an ex-president of this republic. Thanking you in advance for your response.

Yours sincerely,  
S.E. Hartmann

**Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to S.E. Hartmann, October 23, 1917:**

My dear Mr Hartmann,

Letter is private and not for publication.

The statement refers to a quotation from Gouverneur Morris' Journal while he was Minister to France, during the French Revolution. He visited Paine and found him in bed, not having left it for a week, for the purposes of nature, although (sic) seemingly entirely able to do so.

If "filthy" does not does not describe such conduct, no word can. Of course he was a deist, not an atheist. It would be nonsense to answer a soap-box orator.

Sincerely yours  
Theodore Roosevelt

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, March 31, 1918**

My dear Col. Roosevelt,

I am interested in the Gouverneur Morris-Thomas Paine matter and have recently seen your letter to Mr Hartmann, of East Orange, in which you say:

"The statement refers to a quotation from Gouverneur Morris' journal while he was Minister to France, during the French Revolution. He visited Paine, and found him in bed, not having left it for a week, for the purposes of nature, although seemingly entirely able to do so." etc.

I do not find the reference in "The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris, edited by Anne Gray Morris, 2 vols, (Scribner's, 1888). But it is possible that I have overlooked it.

Will you be so good as to let me know if I have been looking in the right books, and, if not to what volume I should refer?

Thanking you in advance for the courtesy of your reply, I am

Yours very truly  
W.M. van der Weyde

**Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to William van der Weyde, April 4, 1918**

Metropolitan, 432 Fourth Avenue, New York, Office of Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Mr Van der Weyde,

The quotation appears in Sparks's Life and Writings of Gouverneur Morris.

Faithfully yours,  
Theodore Roosevelt

Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to William van der Weyde, April 19,  
1918

The Kansas City Star, New York Office, 347 Madison Avenue, Office of  
Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Mr Van der Weyde,

The book in which the statement to which you refer occurs, was written by me thirty years ago. I have forgotten now whether the details of Mr Paine's actions were set forth in manuscript or in a complete edition of his letters and journals. Sparks's Morris is the only one I have at hand. If you will turn to Vol.1, pages 416-8, you will see the following statements: "He had become disgusting in his person and deportment . . . . . for several months he lived in Mr Monroe's house, but so intemperate were his habits and so disagreeable his person that it was necessary to exclude him from the family and send his meals to his own apartments." I need hardly say that this absolutely justifies and requires the use of the adjective I did in fact use in order to describe Paine's person and habits. Instead of atheist, however, I should have used the term deist. Atheist would have been the proper term if I had been dealing with the Thirteenth Century, for example, but in the Eighteenth Century the word deist had come into use to describe the men who denied the existence of the God of revealed religion, whereas atheist was a man who denied the existence of any God. Even in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the terms were sometimes used interchangeably.

Will you kindly send a copy of this letter to the gentleman who wrote you, stating to him, however, that as I wrote him confidentially I do not desire him to make any further use of the letter I sent. I also request that this letter be treated as purely confidential. I send it merely because your own letter was so courteous that I am glad to answer you. But I do not desire or intend to be drawn into any kind of public controversy on the subject: it could not by any possibility result in any benefit. I wish to repeat that the quotations I give from Sparks's

Morris amply warrant my using the adjective I did. If I were writing now I should use the word deist instead of atheist: but this is certainly not a matter of sufficient importance to warrant any re-opening of the question. I have expressed the reasons for my judgment on various public men. It is out of the question for me to re-open the matters as regards these public men, unless new material is given me; and such is not the case in the present instance. Nor have I time for such discussions now,

Faithfully yours  
Theodore Roosevelt

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, May 25, 1918**

My dear Col. Roosevelt:

I have only just now received your letter of April 19<sup>th</sup> in re Gouverneur - Thomas Paine, having been out of town for several weeks. I note by the newspapers that just at this time you are out of town yourself on a speech-making tour, so I shall defer replying to your courteous letter until you are back in the city.

I wish, at present merely to acknowledge receipt of your letter, to thank you for it, and to explain why an acknowledgement was not sooner sent. I mail this to The Metropolitan office with request on envelope that it be forwarded.

Sincerely yours  
W.M.van der Weyde

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, June 24, 1918**

My dear Col. Roosevelt:

On May 25 I sent you a brief note acknowledging receipt of your letter and saying I would defer a reply until your return from the speech-making tour that the newspapers announced. Now that you are back and at your home in Oyster Bay I am sending to you - by express - a copy of Moncure Conway's Life of Thomas Paine, containing a couple of chapters on the

Paine-Morris matter which I think have hitherto escaped your notice, and which will surely interest you.

In the closing paragraph of your letter to me dated April 19, you indicated willingness to revise your judgment "were new material given you": "such", you added, however, "is not the case in the present instance." In the volume I send you not only will you find "new material" but conclusive documentary evidence from the French National Archives in Paris, not brought to light until within comparatively recent years. The evidence is presented in the chapter entitled "A Minister and His Prisoner".

I trust that you will be sufficiently interested to read the entire book. It is well worth reading, being the work of a very careful, conscientious and unbiased biographer, with whose rank as an American historian you are, of course, familiar.

The work of Jared Sparks was published in 1832, at a time when many facts about Paine and Morris had not come to light and when there was a strong religious prejudice against Paine.

There is additional material on the Paine-Morris matter in Volume III, Chap.21 of the Writings of Thomas Paine, edited by Moncure Conway with an important introduction by the Editor. This chapter includes quotations from Sparks. I shall be glad to send you this volume, too, should you care to see it.

I think Mr Roosevelt that you are broad-minded and just, and I feel that new evidence being presented to you, you will be only glad to revise your earlier judgment of Paine. I am in no great hurry for the return of the book I am sending you. Anytime within six weeks or so is quite all right. When you send it back please do so by express, at my expense. May I ask you in the meantime to kindly acknowledge receipt of the book and this letter when they reach you.

Sincerely yours  
W.M. van der Weyde

Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to William van der Weyde, July 1, 1918

The Kansas City Star, New York Office, 347 Madison Avenue, Office of Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Mr Van der Weyde:

I appreciate your letter and I appreciate your having sent me Conway's Paine, which I return herewith. Now my dear Mr Van der Weyde, all this

illuminates exactly why it is so difficult to go into a brief (private or public) argument on a matter which is really connected with the fundamental questions of history. The matter about Paine appeared in a book written by me some thirty years ago. I think I have said to you already, I ought to have used the word deist and not atheist in writing of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These terms have different values in different centuries. Deist for instance was unknown in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when any man who denied the existence of the Christian God was called an atheist, unless as was most common, he was lumped with Mohammedans, Jews and heretics, and styled an infidel. I knew Conway personally. I know his writings somewhat. I do not know them better because I am entirely out of sympathy with them and profoundly distrust his power of accurate statement. I think his views on most points of history absolutely wrong, and his judgments worse than unsafe. In the very chapters to which you refer me, he takes almost Paine's view of Washington and himself attacks Washington vigorously for his attitude towards the French Revolution and completely misstates Washington's position toward Great Britain. In the same chapters his accusations against Morris are absurd. For example, one of Monroe's letters which he quotes, itself shows that Paine was in reality a French citizen; and. Of course, it is nonsense to take any other view of a man who was an active member of the Girondist Party in the Legislative body which at the time represented the supreme government of France. As for the statement by Morris, and by Monroe as quoted by Sparks, concerning the filthy personal habits of Paine, Mr Conway does not contradict it save by inference and does not produce one particle of proof to upset it.

Under these conditions to go into an argument upon the question that you raise, my dear Mr Van der Weyde, would mean the writing of a very large book; nor would it be necessary only to write one book, for I should have to write another as to why I think Washington, and not Washington's enemies such as Paine, took the right position as regards the international questions of the day. It would be necessary for me to explain at length why I think the kind of language that Paine used about Christianity and the Bible was improper and unworthy, when compared with the language which Huxley, for example, used. I am a busy man. I haven't the time to write volumes on every point where I differ from friends or from strangers concerning historical figures. My own view is that sound students of history and politics must come to the conclusion that Washington was immensely right, and Paine immensely wrong during the decade which included Paine's residence as a Revolutionary in Paris. My judgment is also that even from the standpoint of men who do not



accept the Orthodox view of revealed religion, Huxley was right and Paine wrong in their methods of treatment of the subject. But nothing is to be gained by any public thrashing over of this subject. I haven't the time for it and I shall not deal with it further. If I did so in the case of Paine, I might as well do so in the cases of Jefferson, of Monroe, of Calhoun, of Jefferson Davis, of the abolitionists, of the Seccessionists, etc., etc., etc. This letter is for your personal information and in no way for publication.

Sincerely yours  
Theodore Roosevelt

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, July 6 1918**

My dear Col. Roosevelt:

Please accept my thanks for your letter of July 1 and for the return of the Conway Life of Thomas Paine.

Yes I was aware that your appraisal of Paine as a "filthy little Atheist" occurred in the book you wrote some thirty years ago - Life of Gouverneur Morris. I have had a copy of the work for many years and am quite familiar with it. As you say, you should, of course have written Deist instead of Atheist. Paine was a profound believer in God, and his Age of Reason was written because, as he says in his letter to Samuel Adams, "the people of France were running headlong into Atheism" and he wished to "fix them to the first article of every man's creed who has any creed at all, I believe in God."

Regarding the appellation "filthy" you wrote that "the statement refers to a quotation from Gouverneur Morris's journal while he was Minister to France during the French Revolution. He visited Paine and found him in bed, not having left it for a week for purposes of nature, although (sic) seemingly entirely able to do so. If filthy does not describe such conduct no word can.

On April 4 you wrote me "the quotation appears in Sparks's Life and Writings of Gouverneur Morris."

The statement in Sparks's Morris to which you referred in your letter of April 19 (Volume 1, page 416-8) and which you were so kind as to copy for me, is a totally different thing and not a quotation from the journal or writings of Morris, but comment by the Rev. Jared Sparks, editor of Morris's Journal.

In Sparks's work, which I have at hand, I cannot locate Morris's statement about visiting Paine and finding him in bed, etc. I am curious to know if this episode refers to the time Paine was in the Luxembourg Prison, or subsequently, when he was a guest at Monroe's home. I would like to locate the quotation in Sparks's book and would be grateful to you for information as to just where it may be found in that interesting work.

Please accept my thanks in advance for furnishing me this data.

Sincerely yours,  
W.M. van der Weyde

**Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to William van der Weyde, July 9 1918**  
The Kansas City Star, New York Office, 347 Madison Avenue, Office of Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Mr Van der Weyde,

Evidently one of my letters to you went astray. I wrote you three or four weeks ago giving the exact quotations from Sparks, which you have seen. The quotation I first sent you was from some manuscript writings of Morris which were submitted to me some thirty years ago (I am now not able to identify them; indeed I am not sure that they were in manuscript instead of in print) and as I have no time to look up the matter, I have made and shall make no further allusions to it, and shall not quote it. I have never used it in public and I have withdrawn the only two private quotations that I made of it. The statements in Sparks to which you refer completely justify my published statement.

Sincerely yours,  
Theodore Roosevelt

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, July 15, 1918**

Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Oyster Bay, N.Y.

My dear Col. Roosevelt,

Thank you for your letter of July 9. I am glad that you will not again use as a quotation from the journal of Gouverneur Morris the words regarding Paine's "filthy condition" which you quoted to me in the beginning of our little correspondence, and that you have withdrawn the only two quotations that you have made of it (presumably to me and Mr Hartmann).

Yes I received the letter in which you so kindly transcribed for me the paragraphs concerning Paine which occur in Jared Sparks's Life and Writings of Gouverneur Morris (Vol.I pp.416-8), and in my last letter

dated July 6 I thanked you but called your attention to the fact that the passages to which you referred are not really quotations from the journal of Morris but are plainly the comments (no quotation marks) of the editor Sparks. The Rev. Jared Sparks was not personally acquainted with Paine and was, without a shadow of doubt, biased in his opinions by religious prejudice.

In your last letter you say "The statements in Sparks to which you refer (Vol.I ,pp 416-8) completely justify my published statement. "I am afraid I shall have to differ with you in this particular, for the reasons given in the previous paragraph.

Even were the statements those of Morris, instead of allegations by Sparks, I should be inclined to doubt their reliability for the reason that Morris's character was not above reproach, as one may gather from your own estimate of Morris, as expressed in your Life of Gouverneur Morris. You tell how "Morris actually advocated repudiating our war debt", and you remark that "no greenback demagogue of the lowest type ever advocated a proposition more dishonest and more contemptible." You also say of Morris, "he sneered at the words union and constitution as being meaningless": "he strongly advocated secession" and "throughout the War of 1812 appeared as the open champion of treason to the nation". Etc., etc.

At the time (1887) that you wrote the Life of Gouverneur Morris in which your reference to Thomas Paine as a "filthy little Atheist" occurs, there was no good biography of Paine to which you might refer for information but there were several scurrilous books purporting to be biographies of Paine, which were in fact merely mediums for the defamation of a man who had incurred political and theologic hatred. Even the biographic encyclopedias of that period - thirtyone years ago reprinted as historic fact the various calumnies about Paine that had long passed current, thus perpetuating what is now known to be merely slander of the dead.

Your estimate of Paine as "filthy" and as an "Atheist" was, no doubt, founded on the only information available to you at that time - the scurrilous "biographies" to which I refer and the attempts at belittlement by Morris, who was extremely jealous of Paine and who had reason to fear exposure if Paine were released from the Luxembourg.

Paine was not an "Atheist", as you now admit, but also he was not "filthy".

Paine was the friend and companion of persons that would hardly have had a filthy man for an associate. Among Paine's friends in America were Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Madison, Monroe, Dr Benjamin Rush,

Richard Henry Lee, Robert R. Livingston, Henry Laurens, Albert Gallatin, General Nathaniel Greene, Lewis Morris and Robert Morris, Burr and Hamilton. These are but a few of his circle of friends of American Revolutionary days. They are not people that would consort with a man who was filthy.

Paine's friends when he was in Europe included many of the most eminent persons in England and France, such people as M. and Mme. Lafayette, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, J. Horne Tooke, M. and Mme. Brissot, Charles James Fox, George Romney, Robert Fulton, Major General James Jackson, Dr Joseph Priestley, Herault de Sechelles, Thomas Clio Rickman, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thoms Erskine, Joel Barlow and Doctor Thomas Cooper. These are hardly the names of persons who would make a friend of and entertain a man who was filthy.

The portraits of Paine, painted by the most eminent artists of America, England and France, the earliest by Charles Wilson Peale (within a year or two of Paine's arrival in America), and the last by John Wesley Jarvis (within a year or two of his death,) all show Paine to have been scrupulously neat and clean, both in his dress and his person. Other eminent painters whose portraits of Paine also bear witness to his cleanliness are George Romney, General John Trumbull and F. de Bonneville.

In the archives of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, (of which I have the honor of being a member) there is a mass of testimony as to Paine's cleanliness of person and habits - all at your disposal if you wish to see it. Were my letter already far longer than I had intended I would include some of this testimony.

The fables about Paine promulgated in the scurrilous "biographies" of the long ago are now known to be pure mythology, created only for political and theological purposes. In the past quarter of a century the real Paine has emerged from the mass of misrepresentation to shine as one of the illustrious of names.

Walt Whitman, referring to the calumnies of Paine, wrote this:

"Paine was double damnably lied about. Anything lower, meaner, more contemptible, I cannot imagine; to take an aged man - a man tired to death after a complicated life of toil, struggle, anxiety, - weak, dragged-down, at death's door; . . . .then to pull him into the mud, distort everything he does and says: oh, it's infamous.

"Thomas Paine had a noble personality, as exhibited in presence, face, voice, dress, manner and what may be called his atmosphere and magnetism, especially the later years of his life. I am sure of it. Of the foul and foolish fictions yet told about the circumstances of his decease,

the absolute fact is that he lived a good life, after its kind: he died calmly and philosophically as became him."

I am confident Mr Roosevelt that as a fair-minded man and as an American historian, you wish only to have the exact and entire truth, and that only the presentation of evidence is needed to have you revise your earlier judgment that Paine was filthy.

Is the evidence herein presented convincing to you that Paine was not filthy? If not quite sufficient I shall be glad to dig out from the Paine Association's archives, and present to you, additionally, the testimony of Thomas Paine's associates through many years.

Sincerely yours  
W.M. van der Weyde

**Letter of William van der Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, August 18, 1918**

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt  
Oyster Bay, N.Y.

My dear Col. Roosevelt:

Since I have not heard from you in reply to my last letter dated July 15, I think that perhaps my communication (addressed to Oyster Bay) went astray in the mails and did not reach you.

My letter contained evidence in the Paine matter that I am sure would interest you, as an American historian. Luckily I kept a copy of the letter and this I would be glad to forward to you if the original letter was lost.

Knowing of your bereavement I have not expected, nor wished, a prompt response, and I write now only with the idea that my letter may have miscarried, and to say that I shall be very glad to have your reply when you feel able to take the matter up.

I am glad to note in the newspapers that you are again enjoying good health.

Sincerely yours  
W.M. van der Weyde

**Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to Mr W.M. van der Weyde, August 21, 1918**

The Kansas City Star, New York Office, 347 Madison Avenue, Office of Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Mr Van der Weyde:

I have answered every letter I have received from you; but now, my dear sir, you must excuse my saying that I cannot correspond any longer with

you or anyone else concerning Mr Thomas Paine. I do not think you understand how busy I am. This is the last letter I shall write in the matter. Your letters to me showed such good spirit that I was betrayed into going into a correspondence which has evidently been utterly useless. What I wrote of Thomas Paine in the book to which you refer, over thirty years ago, contains the substantial truth; and whether or not I would now tell it in quite the same language does not matter. The only alteration I would make, in the interest of a rather meticulous correctness of terminology, would be in the use of the word deist instead of atheist. However the word atheist is probably also correct. This you will see if you will turn to the Life of Huxley, by his son and read Huxley's letter to Kingsley in the year 1863. He there explicitly states that in his view, according to the customary terminology and probably according to legal construction, the word atheist could be used to describe him, Huxley. I should myself, of course, describe Huxley as an agnostic rather than as either an atheist or a deist.

You understand that our correspondence has been private and is not to be published. The utter uselessness of such a discussion, either private or public, is shown by the fact that after having been forced to take up a good deal of my time in answering your queries, I see no reason whatever to make the slightest change in my statement, except as above indicated. But this is not all. As regards most historical questions there is always room for a difference of opinion. I take Macauley's view of Marlborough and Penn for instance. I have said so in my published works. Perhaps you take directly the opposite view of both. But it would be an utter absurdity for me to go into a long discussion with you about our respective views of Marlborough and Penn. It is exactly as much an absurdity to have my time taken up in such a discussion about Paine.

Very sincerely yours,  
Theodore Roosevelt

**Letter of William van derr Weyde to Theodore Roosevelt, August 29  
1918**

The Kansas City Star, New York Office, 347 Madison Avenue, Office of  
Theodore Roosevelt

My dear Colonel Roosevelt,

I know you would not wish to bring our little correspondence to a close with the omission of a reply to my letter of July 15, especially as your favor of August 21, which I received yesterdays says, "I have answered every letter I have received from you." This statement quite convinces

me that my letter of July 15 did not reach you, for that letter remains unanswered.

As the letter (July 15) contains important evidence on the subject regarding which we corresponded, I feel sure you will be glad to have a duplicate and I take pleasure therefore in enclosing a copy.

The letter I have just received from you dealing only with the matter of Deist and Atheist, no reference being made to the claim that Paine was "filthy" - this latter being the entire subject matter of my letter - impresses me with the idea that my July 15 letter certainly went astray in the mails.

You will be interested I am sure, in the evidence concerning Paine which is presented in the enclosed letter (copy dated July 15).

Although your letter tells me that you cannot continue the correspondence about Paine, I hardly think you will wish to end with my most important communication on the subject unanswered.

I trust that after reading my copy letter of July 15 you will favor me with your opinion. Then I shall have had a reply to all of my letters.

Sincerely yours,  
W..M. van der Weyde

P.S. Yes I have the Life of Huxley by his son Leonard and have found great pleasure in reading it. It is an extremely interesting and authoritative work by a most competent biographer.

**Letter of J.M. Stricker to William van der Weyde September 4 1918**  
The Kansas City Star  
New York Office  
347 Madison Avenue  
Office of Theodore Roosevelt

Dear Mr Van der Weyde:

Colonel Roosevelt does not see that there is anything he can add to what he has written and it is not possible for him to go further into the matter.

With regret.

Sincerely yours, J.M. Stricker, Secretary

Transcribed by Audrey Taylor.