

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A NEW YORK PROMETHEUS.

WHEN Paine left Bordentown, on March 1st, 1803, driving past placards of the devil flying away with him, and hooted by a pious mob at Trenton, it was with hope of a happy reunion with old friends in more enlightened New York. Col. Few, formerly senator from Georgia, his friend of many years, married Paine's correspondent, Kitty Nicholson, to whom was written the beautiful letter from London (i., p. 247). Col. Few had become a leading man in New York, and his home, and that of the Nicholsons, were of highest social distinction. Paine's arrival at Lovett's Hotel was well known, but not one of those former friends came near him. "They were actively as well as passively religious," says Henry Adams, "and their relations with Paine after his return to America in 1802 were those of compassion only, for his intemperate and offensive habits, and intimacy was impossible."<sup>1</sup> But Mr. Adams will vainly search his materials for any intimation at that time of the intemperate or offensive habits.

The "compassion" is due to those devotees of an idol requiring sacrifice of friendship, loyalty, and

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Albert Gallatin." Gallatin continued to visit Paine.

intelligence. What a mistake they made! The old author was as a grand organ from which a cunning hand might bring music to be remembered through the generations. In that brain were stored memories of the great Americans, Frenchmen, Englishmen who acted in the revolutionary dramas, and of whom he loved to talk. What would a diary of interviews with Paine, written by his friend Kitty Few, be now worth? To intolerance, the least pardonable form of ignorance, must be credited the failure of those former friends, who supposed themselves educated, to make more of Thomas Paine than a scarred monument of an Age of Unreason.

But the ostracism of Paine by the society which, as Henry Adams states, had once courted him "as the greatest literary genius of his day," was not due merely to his religious views, which were those of various statesmen who had incurred no such odium. There was at work a lingering dislike and distrust of the common people. Deism had been rather aristocratic. From the scholastic study, where heresies once written only in Latin were daintily wrapped up in metaphysics, from drawing-rooms where cynical smiles went round at Methodism, and other forms of "Christianity in earnest," Paine carried heresy to the people. And he brought it as a religion,—as fire from the fervid heaven that orthodoxy had monopolized. The popularity of his writing, the revivalistic earnestness of his protest against dogmas common to all sects, were revolutionary; and while the vulgar bigots were binding him on their rock of ages, and tearing his

vitals, most of the educated, the social leaders, were too prudent to manifest any sympathy they may have felt.<sup>1</sup>

It were unjust to suppose that Paine met with nothing but abuse and maltreatment from ministers of serious orthodoxy in New York. They had warmly opposed his views, even denounced them, but the controversy seems to have died away until he took part in the deistic propaganda of Elihu Palmer.<sup>2</sup> The following to Col. Fellows (July 31st) shows Paine much interested in the "cause":

"I am glad that Palmer and Foster have got together. It will greatly help the cause on. I enclose a letter I received a few days since from Groton, in Connecticut. The letter is well written, and with a good deal of sincere enthusiasm. The publication of it would do good, but there is an impropriety in publishing a man's name to a private letter. You may show the letter to Palmer and Foster. . . . Remember me to my much respected friend Carver and tell him I am sure we shall succeed if we hold on. We have already silenced the clamor of the priests. They act now as if they would say, let us alone and we will let you alone. You do not tell me if the Prospect goes on. As Carver will want pay he may have it from me, and pay when it suits him; but I expect he will take a ride up some Saturday, and then he can chuse for himself."

The result of this was that Paine passed the winter in New York, where he threw himself

<sup>1</sup> When Paine first reached New York, 1803, he was (March 5th) entertained at supper by John Crauford. For being present Eliakim Ford, a Baptist elder, was furiously denounced, as were others of the company.

<sup>2</sup> An exception was the leading Presbyterian, John Mason, who lived to denounce Channing as "the devil's disciple." Grant Thorburn was psalm-singer in this Scotch preacher's church. Curiosity to see the lion led Thorburn to visit Paine, for which he was "suspended." Thorburn afterwards made amends by fathering Cheetham's slanders of Paine after Cheetham had become too infamous to quote.

warmly into the theistic movement, and no doubt occasionally spoke from Elihu Palmer's platform.

The rationalists who gathered around Elihu Palmer in New York were called the "Columbian Illuminati." The pompous epithet looks like an effort to connect them with the Columbian Order (Tammany) which was supposed to represent Jacobinism and French ideas generally. Their numbers were considerable, but they did not belong to fashionable society. Their lecturer, Elihu Palmer, was a scholarly gentleman of the highest character. A native of Canterbury, Connecticut, (born 1754,) he had graduated at Dartmouth. He was married by the Rev. Mr. Watt to a widow, Mary Powell, in New York (1803), at the time when he was lecturing in the Temple of Reason (Snow's Rooms, Broadway). This suggests that he had not broken with the clergy altogether. Somewhat later he lectured at the Union Hotel, William Street. He had studied divinity, and turned against the creeds what was taught him for their support.

"I have more than once [says Dr. Francis] listened to Palmer; none could be weary within the sound of his voice; his diction was classical; and much of his natural theology attractive by variety of illustration. But admiration of him sank into despondency at his assumption, and his sarcastic assaults on things most holy. His boldest phillippic was his discourse on the title-page of the Bible, in which, with the double shield of jacobinism and infidelity, he warned rising America against confidence in a book authorised by the monarchy of England. Palmer delivered his sermons in the Union Hotel in William Street."

Dr. Francis does not appear to have known Paine personally, but had seen him. Palmer's chief friends in New York were, he says, John Fellows; Rose, an unfortunate lawyer; Taylor, a philanthropist; and Charles Christian. Of Rev. John Foster, another rationalist lecturer, Dr. Francis says he had a noble presence and great eloquence. Foster's exordium was an invocation to the goddess of Liberty. He and Palmer called each other Brother. No doubt Paine completed the Triad.

Col. John Fellows, always the devoted friend of Paine, was an auctioneer, but in later life was a constable in the city courts. He has left three volumes which show considerable literary ability, and industrious research; but these were unfortunately bestowed on such extinct subjects as Freemasonry, the secret of Junius, and controversies concerning General Putnam. It is much to be regretted that Colonel Fellows should not have left a volume concerning Paine, with whom he was in especial intimacy, during his last years.

Other friends of Paine were Thomas Addis Emmet, Walter Morton, a lawyer, and Judge Hertell, a man of wealth, and a distinguished member of the State Assembly. Fulton also was much in New York, and often called on Paine. Paine was induced to board at the house of William Carver (36 Cedar Street), which proved a grievous mistake. Carver had introduced himself to Paine, saying that he remembered him when he was an exciseman at Lewes, England, he (Carver) being a young farrier there. He made loud professions of deism, and of devotion to Paine. The

farrier of Lewes had become a veterinary practitioner and shopkeeper in New York. Paine supposed that he would be cared for in the house of this active rationalist, but the man and his family were illiterate and vulgar. His sojourn at Carver's probably shortened Paine's life. Carver, to anticipate the narrative a little, turned out to be a bad-hearted man and a traitor.

Paine had accumulated a mass of fragmentary writings on religious subjects, and had begun publishing them in a journal started in 1804 by Elihu Palmer,—*The Prospect; or View of the Moral World*. This succeeded the paper called *The Temple of Reason*. One of Paine's objects was to help the new journal, which attracted a good deal of attention. His first communication (February 18, 1804), was on a sermon by Robert Hall, on "Modern Infidelity," sent him by a gentleman in New York. The following are some of its trenchant paragraphs :

"Is it a fact that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and how is it proved? If a God he could not die, and as a man he could not redeem: how then is this redemption proved to be fact? It is said that Adam eat of the forbidden fruit, commonly called an apple, and thereby subjected himself and all his posterity forever to eternal damnation. This is worse than visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. But how was the death of Jesus Christ to affect or alter the case? Did God thirst for blood? If so, would it not have been better to have crucified Adam upon the forbidden tree, and made a new man?"

"Why do not the Christians, to be consistent, make Saints of Judas and Pontius Pilate, for they were the persons who accomplished the act of salvation. The merit of a sacrifice, if there can

be any merit in it, was never in the thing sacrificed, but in the persons offering up the sacrifice—and therefore Judas and Pilate ought to stand first in the calendar of Saints.”

Other contributions to the *Prospect* were: “Of the word Religion”; “Cain and Abel”; “The Tower of Babel”; “Of the religion of Deism compared with the Christian Religion”; “Of the Sabbath Day in Connecticut”; “Of the Old and New Testaments”; “Hints towards forming a Society for inquiring into the truth or falsehood of ancient history, so far as history is connected with systems of religion ancient and modern”; “To the members of the Society styling itself the Missionary Society”; “On Deism, and the writings of Thomas Paine”; “Of the Books of the New Testament.” There were several communications without any heading. Passages and sentences from these little essays have long been a familiar currency among freethinkers.

“We admire the wisdom of the ancients, yet they had no bibles, nor books, called revelation. They cultivated the reason that God gave them, studied him in his works, and rose to eminence.”

“The Cain and Abel of Genesis appear to be no other than the ancient Egyptian story of Typhon and Osiris, the darkness and the light, which answered very well as allegory without being believed as fact.”

“Those who most believe the Bible are those who know least about it.”

“Another observation upon the story of Babel is, the inconsistency of it with respect to the opinion that the bible is the word of God given for the information of mankind; for nothing could so effectually prevent such a word being known by mankind as confounding their language.”

“God has not given us reason for the purpose of confounding us.”

“Jesus never speaks of Adam, of the Garden of Eden, nor of what is called the fall of man.”

“Is not the Bible warfare the same kind of warfare as the Indians themselves carry on?” [On the presentation of a Bible to some Osage chiefs in New York.]

“The remark of the Emperor Julian is worth observing. ‘If,’ said he, ‘there ever had been or could be a Tree of Knowledge, instead of God forbidding man to eat thereof, it would be that of which he would order him to eat the most.’”

“Do Christians not see that their own religion is founded on a human sacrifice? Many thousands of human sacrifices have since been offered on the altar of the Christian Religion.”

“For several centuries past the dispute has been about doctrines. It is now about fact.”

“The Bible has been received by Protestants on the authority of the Church of Rome.”

“The same degree of hearsay evidence, and that at third and fourth hand, would not, in a court of justice, give a man title to a cottage, and yet the priests of this profession presumptuously promise their deluded followers the kingdom of Heaven.”

“Nobody fears for the safety of a mountain, but a hillock of sand may be washed away. Blow then, O ye priests, “the Trumpet in Zion,” for the Hillock is in danger.”

The force of Paine's negations was not broken by any weakness for speculations of his own. He constructed no system to invite the missiles of antagonists. It is, indeed, impossible to deny without affirming; denial that two and two make five affirms that they make four. The basis of Paine's denials being the divine wisdom and benevolence, there was in his use of such expressions an implication of limitation in the divine nature. Wisdom implies the necessity of dealing with difficulties,



and benevolence the effort to make all sentient creatures happy. Neither quality is predicable of an omniscient and omnipotent being, for whom there could be no difficulties or evils to overcome. Paine did not confuse the world with his doubts or with his mere opinions. He stuck to his certainties, that the scriptural deity was not the true one, nor the dogmas called Christian reasonable. But he felt some of the moral difficulties surrounding theism, and these were indicated in his reply to the Bishop of Llandaff.

“The Book of Job belongs either to the ancient Persians, the Chaldeans, or the Egyptians ; because the structure of it is consistent with the dogma they held, that of a good and evil spirit, called in Job *God* and *Satan*, existing as distinct and separate beings, and it is not consistent with any dogma of the Jews. . . . The God of the Jews was the God of everything. All good and evil came from him. According to Exodus it was God, and not the Devil, that hardened Pharaoh’s heart. According to the Book of Samuel it was an evil spirit from God that troubled Saul. And Ezekiel makes God say, in speaking of the Jews, ‘I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they should not live.’ . . . As to the precepts, principles, and maxims in the Book of Job, they show that the people abusively called the heathen, in the books of the Jews, had the most sublime ideas of the Creator, and the most exalted devotional morality. It was the Jews who dishonored God. It was the Gentiles who glorified him.”

Several passages in Paine’s works show that he did not believe in a personal devil ; just what he did believe was no doubt written in a part of his reply to the Bishop, which, unfortunately, he did not live to carry through the press. In the part that we have he expresses the opinion that the

Serpent of Genesis is an allegory of winter, necessitating the "coats of skins" to keep Adam and Eve warm, and adds: "Of these things I shall speak fully when I come in another part to speak of the ancient religion of the Persians, and compare it with the modern religion of the New Testament." But this part was never published. The part published was transcribed by Paine and given, not long before his death, to the widow of Elihu Palmer, who published it in the *Theophilanthropist* in 1810. Paine had kept the other part, no doubt for revision, and it passed with his effects into the hands of Madame Bonneville, who eventually became a devotee. She either suppressed it or sold it to some one who destroyed it. We can therefore only infer from the above extract the author's belief on this momentous point. It seems clear that he did not attribute any evil to the divine Being. In the last article Paine published he rebukes the "Predestinarians" for dwelling mainly on God's "physical attribute" of power. "The Deists, in addition to this, believe in his moral attributes, those of justice and goodness."

Among Paine's papers was found one entitled "My private thoughts of a Future State," from which his editors have dropped important sentences.

"I have said in the first part of the Age of Reason that 'I hope for happiness after this life.' This hope is comfortable to me, and I presume not to go beyond the comfortable idea of hope, with respect to a future state. I consider myself in the hands of my Creator, and that he will dispose of me after this life, consistently with his justice and goodness. I leave all these matters to him as my Creator and friend, and I hold it to

be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with us hereafter. I do not believe, because a man and a woman make a child, that it imposes on the Creator the unavoidable obligation of keeping the being so made in eternal existence hereafter. It is in his power to do so, or not to do so, and it is not in our power to decide which he will do." [After quoting from Matthew 25th the figure of the sheep and goats he continues :] "The world cannot be thus divided. The moral world, like the physical world, is composed of numerous degrees of character, running imperceptibly one into the other, in such a manner that no fixed point can be found in either. That point is nowhere, or is everywhere. The whole world might be divided into two parts numerically, but not as to moral character ; and therefore the metaphor of dividing them, as sheep and goats can be divided, whose difference is marked by their external figure, is absurd. All sheep are still sheep ; all goats are still goats ; it is their physical nature to be so. But one part of the world are not all good alike, nor the other part all wicked alike. There are some exceedingly good, others exceedingly wicked. There is another description of men who cannot be ranked with either the one or the other—they belong neither to the sheep nor the goats. And there is still another description of them who are so very insignificant, both in character and conduct, as not to be worth the trouble of damning or saving, or of raising from the dead. My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavouring to make their fellow mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, will be happy hereafter ; and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment. But those who are neither good nor bad, or are too insignificant for notice, will be dropt entirely. This is my opinion. It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me, and I gratefully know that he has given me a large share of that divine gift."

The closing tribute to his own reason, written in privacy, was, perhaps pardonably, suppressed by the modern editor, and also the reference to the insignificant who "will be dropt entirely." This

sentiment is not indeed democratic, but it is significant. It seems plain that Paine's conception of the universe was dualistic. Though he discards the notion of a devil, I do not find that he ever ridicules it. No doubt he would, were he now living, incline to a division of nature into organic and inorganic, and find his deity, as Zoroaster did, in the living as distinguished from, and sometimes in antagonism with, the "not-living." In this belief he would now find himself in harmony with some of the ablest modern philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

The opening year 1806 found Paine in New Rochelle. By insufficient nourishment in Carver's house his health was impaired. His means were getting low, insomuch that to support the Bonneville's he had to sell the Bordentown house and property.<sup>2</sup> Elihu Palmer had gone off to Philadelphia for a time; he died there of yellow fever in 1806. The few intelligent people whom Paine knew were much occupied, and he was almost without congenial society. His hint to Jefferson of his impending poverty, and his reminder that Virginia had not yet given him the honorarium he and Madison approved, had brought no result. With all this, and the loss of early friendships, and the theological hornet-nest he had found in New

<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill, for instance. See also the Rev. Dr. Abbott's "Kernel and Husk" (London), and the great work of Samuel Laing, "A Modern Zoroastrian."

<sup>2</sup> It was bought for \$300 by his friend John Oliver, whose daughter, still residing in the house, told me that her father to the end of his life "thought everything of Paine." John Oliver, in his old age, visited Colonel Ingersoll in order to testify against the aspersions on Paine's character and habits.

York, Paine began to feel that his return to America was a mistake.

The air-castle that had allured him to his beloved land had faded. His little room with the Bonneviles in Paris, with its chaos of papers, was preferable; for there at least he could enjoy the society of educated persons, free from bigotry. He dwelt a stranger in his Land of Promise.

So he resolved to try and free himself from his depressing environment. He would escape to Europe again. Jefferson had offered him a ship to return in, perhaps he would now help him to get back. So he writes (Jan. 30th) a letter to the President, pointing out the probabilities of a crisis in Europe which must result in either a descent on England by Bonaparte, or in a treaty. In the case that the people of England should be thus liberated from tyranny, he (Paine) desired to share with his friends there the task of framing a republic. Should there be, on the other hand, a treaty of peace, it would be of paramount interest to American shipping that such treaty should include that maritime compact, or safety of the seas for neutral ships, of which Paine had written so much, and which Jefferson himself had caused to be printed in a pamphlet. Both of these were, therefore, Paine's subjects. "I think," he says, "you will find it proper, perhaps necessary, to send a person to France in the event of either a treaty or a descent, and I make you an offer of my services on that occasion to join Mr. Monroe. . . . As I think that the letters of a friend to a friend have some claim to an answer, it will be

agreeable to me to receive an answer to this, but without any wish that you should commit yourself, neither can you be a judge of what is proper or necessary to be done till about the month of April or May."

This little dream must also vanish. Paine must face the fact that his career is ended.

It is probable that Elihu Palmer's visit to Philadelphia was connected with some theistic movement in that city. How it was met, and what annoyances Paine had to suffer, are partly intimated in the following letter, printed in the *Philadelphia Commercial Advertiser*, February 10, 1806.

"TO JOHN INSKEEP, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

"I saw in the *Aurora* of January the 30th a piece addressed to you and signed Isaac Hall. It contains a statement of your malevolent conduct in refusing to let him have Vine-st. Wharf after he had bid fifty dollars more rent for it than another person had offered, and had been unanimously approved of by the Commissioners appointed by law for that purpose. Among the reasons given by you for this refusal, one was, that '*Mr Hall was one of Paine's disciples.*' If those whom you may chuse to call my disciples follow my example in doing good to mankind, they will pass the confines of this world with a happy mind, while the hope of the hypocrite shall perish and delusion sink into despair.

"I do not know who Mr. Inskeep is, for I do not remember the name of Inskeep at Philadelphia in '*the time that tried men's souls.*' He must be some mushroom of modern growth that has started up on the soil which the generous services of Thomas Paine contributed to bless with freedom; neither do I know what profession of religion he is of, nor do I care, for if he is a man malevolent and unjust, it signifies not to what class or sectary he may hypocritically belong.

"As I set too much value on my time to waste it on a man of so little consequence as yourself, I will close this short

address with a declaration that puts hypocrisy and malevolence to defiance. Here it is: My motive and object in all my political works, beginning with *Common Sense*, the first work I ever published, have been to rescue man from tyranny and false systems and false principles of government, and enable him to be free, and establish government for himself; and I have borne my share of danger in Europe and in America in every attempt I have made for this purpose. And my motive and object in all my publications on religious subjects, beginning with the first part of the *Age of Reason*, have been to bring man to a right reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men and to all creatures; and to excite in him a spirit of trust, confidence and consolation in his creator, unshackled by the fable and fiction of books, by whatever invented name they may be called. I am happy in the continual contemplation of what I have done, and I thank God that he gave me talents for the purpose and fortitude to do it. It will make the continual consolation of my departing hours, whenever they finally arrive.

“THOMAS PAINE.”

“‘*These are the times that try men’s souls.*’ Crisis No. 1, written while on the retreat with the army from fort Lee to the Delaware and published in Philadelphia in the dark days of 1776 December the 19th, six days before the taking of the Hessians at Trenton.”

But the year 1806 had a heavier blow yet to inflict on Paine, and it naturally came, though in a roundabout way, from his old enemy Gouverneur Morris. While at New Rochelle, Paine offered his vote at the election, and it was refused, on the ground that he was not an American citizen! The supervisor declared that the former American Minister, Gouverneur Morris, had refused to reclaim him from a French prison because he was not an

American, and that Washington had also refused to reclaim him. Gouverneur Morris had just lost his seat in Congress, and was politically defunct, but his ghost thus rose on poor Paine's pathway. The supervisor who disfranchised the author of "Common Sense" had been a "Tory" in the Revolution; the man he disfranchised was one to whom the President of the United States had written, five years before: "I am in hopes you will find us returned generally to sentiments worthy of former times. In these it will be your glory to have steadily labored, and with as much effect as any man living." There was not any question of Paine's qualification as a voter on other grounds than the supervisor (Elisha Ward) raised. More must presently be said concerning this incident. Paine announced his intention of suing the inspectors, but meanwhile he had to leave the polls in humiliation. It was the fate of this founder of republics to be a monument of their ingratitude.

And now Paine's health began to fail. An intimation of this appears in a letter to Andrew A. Dean, to whom his farm at New Rochelle was let, dated from New York, August, 1806. It is in reply to a letter from Dean on a manuscript which Paine had lent him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I have read," says Dean, "with good attention your manuscript on Dreams, and Examination of the Prophecies in the Bible. I am now searching the old prophecies, and comparing the same to those said to be quoted in the New Testament. I confess the comparison is a matter worthy of our serious attention; I know not the result till I finish; then, if you be living, I shall communicate the same to you. I hope to be with you soon." Paine was now living with Jarvis, the artist. One evening he fell as if by apoplexy, and, as he lay, his first word was (to Jarvis): "My corporeal functions have ceased; my intellect is clear; this is a proof of immortality."



“RESPECTED FRIEND : I received your friendly letter, for which I am obliged to you. It is three weeks ago to day (Sunday, Aug. 15,) that I was struck with a fit of an apoplexy, that deprived me of all sense and motion. I had neither pulse nor breathing, and the people about me supposed me dead. I had felt exceedingly well that day, and had just taken a slice of bread and butter for supper, and was going to bed. The fit took me on the stairs, as suddenly as if I had been shot through the head ; and I got so very much hurt by the fall, that I have not been able to get in and out of bed since that day, otherwise than being lifted out in a blanket, by two persons ; yet all this while my mental faculties have remained as perfect as I ever enjoyed them. I consider the scene I have passed through as an experiment on dying, and I find death has no terrors for me. As to the people called Christians, they have no evidence that their religion is true. There is no more proof that the Bible is the word of God, than that the Koran of Mahomet is the word of God. It is education makes all the difference. Man, before he begins to think for himself, is as much the child of habit in Creeds as he is in ploughing and sowing. Yet creeds, like opinions, prove nothing. Where is the evidence that the person called Jesus Christ is the begotten Son of God ? The case admits not of evidence either to our senses or our mental faculties : neither has God given to man any talent by which such a thing is comprehensible. It cannot therefore be an object for faith to act upon, for faith is nothing more than an assent the mind gives to something it sees cause to believe is fact. But priests, preachers, and fanatics, put imagination in the place of faith, and it is the nature of the imagination to believe without evidence. If Joseph the carpenter dreamed (as the book of Matthew, chapter 1st, says he did,) that his betrothed wife, Mary, was with child by the Holy Ghost, and that an angel told him so, I am not obliged to put faith in his dream ; nor do I put any, for I put no faith in my own dreams, and I should be weak and foolish indeed to put faith in the dreams of others.—The Christian religion is derogatory to the Creator in all its articles. It puts the Creator in an inferior point of view, and places the Christian Devil above him. It is he, according to the absurd story in Genesis, that outwits the

Creator, in the garden of Eden, and steals from him his favorite creature, man ; and, at last, obliges him to beget a son, and put that son to death, to get man back again. And this the priests of the Christian religion, call redemption.

“ Christian authors exclaim against the practice of offering human sacrifices, which, they say, is done in some countries ; and those authors make those exclamations without ever reflecting that their own doctrine of salvation is founded on a human sacrifice. They are saved, they say, by the blood of Christ. The Christian religion begins with a dream and ends with a murder.

“ As I am well enough to sit up some hours in the day, though not well enough to get up without help, I employ myself as I have always done, in endeavoring to bring man to the right use of the reason that God has given him, and to direct his mind immediately to his Creator, and not to fanciful secondary beings called mediators, as if God was superannuated or ferocious.

“ As to the book called the Bible, it is blasphemy to call it the word of God. It is a book of lies and contradictions, and a history of bad times and bad men. There are but a few good characters in the whole book. The fable of Christ and his twelve apostles, which is a parody on the sun and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, copied from the ancient religions of the eastern world, is the least hurtful part. Every thing told of Christ has reference to the sun. His reported resurrection is at sunrise, and that on the first day of the week ; that is, on the day anciently dedicated to the sun, and from thence called Sunday ; in latin *Dies Solis*, the day of the sun ; as the next day, Monday, is Moon day. But there is no room in a letter to explain these things. While man keeps to the belief of one God, his reason unites with his creed. He is not shocked with contradictions and horrid stories. His bible is the heavens and the earth. He beholds his Creator in all his works, and every thing he beholds inspires him with reverence and gratitude. From the goodness of God to all, he learns his duty to his fellow-man, and stands self-reproved when he transgresses it. Such a man is no persecutor. But when he multiplies his creed with imaginary things, of which he can have neither evi-

dence nor conception, such as the tale of the garden of Eden, the talking serpent, the fall of man, the dreams of Joseph the carpenter, the pretended resurrection and ascension, of which there is even no historical relation, for no historian of those times mentions such a thing, he gets into the pathless region of confusion, and turns either frantic or hypocrite. He forces his mind, and pretends to believe what he does not believe. This is in general the case with the Methodists. Their religion is all creed and no morals.

“I have now my friend given you a fac-simile of my mind on the subject of religion and creeds, and my wish is, that you may make this letter as publicly known as you find opportunities of doing. Yours in friendship.”

The “*Essay on Dream*” was written early in 1806 and printed in May, 1807. It was the last work of importance written by Paine. In the same pamphlet was included a part of his reply to the Bishop of Llandaff, which was written in France: “*An Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, quoted from the Old, and called Prophecies of the Coming of Jesus Christ.*” The Examination is widely known and is among Paine’s characteristic works,—a continuation of the “*Age of Reason.*” The “*Essay on Dream*” is a fine specimen of the author’s literary art. Dream is the imagination awake while the judgment is asleep. “Every person is mad once in twenty-four hours; for were he to act in the day as he dreams in the night, he would be confined for a lunatic.” Nathaniel Hawthorne thought spiritualism “a sort of dreaming awake.” Paine explained in the same way some of the stories on which popular religion is founded. The incarnation itself rests on what an angel told Joseph in a dream, and others are re-

ferred to. "This story of dreams has thrown Europe into a dream for more than a thousand years. All the efforts that nature, reason, and conscience have made to awaken man from it have been ascribed by priestcraft and superstition to the workings of the devil, and had it not been for the American revolution, which by establishing the universal right of conscience, first opened the way to free discussion, and for the French revolution which followed, this religion of dreams had continued to be preached, and that after it had ceased to be believed."

But Paine was to be reminded that the revolution had not made conscience free enough in America to challenge waking dreams without penalties. The following account of his disfranchisement at New Rochelle, was written from Broome St., New York, May 4, 1807, to Vice-President Clinton.

"RESPECTED FRIEND,—Elisha Ward and three or four other Tories who lived within the british lines in the revolutionary war, got in to be inspectors of the election last year at New Rochelle. Ward was supervisor. These men refused my vote at the election, saying to me: 'You are not an American; our minister at Paris, Gouverneur Morris, would not reclaim you when you were imprisoned in the Luxembourg prison at Paris, and General Washington refused to do it.' Upon my telling him that the two cases he stated were falsehoods, and that if he did me injustice I would prosecute him, he got up, and calling for a constable, said to me, 'I will commit you to prison.' He chose, however, to sit down and go no farther with it.

"I have written to Mr. Madison for an attested copy of Mr. Monro's letter to the then Secretary of State Randolph, in which Mr. Monro gives the government an account of his reclaiming me and my liberation in consequence of it; and also for an attested copy of Mr. Randolph's answer, in which he

says : 'The President approves what you have done in the case of Mr. Paine.' The matter I believe is, that, as I had not been guillotined, Washington thought best to say what he did. As to Gouverneur Morris, the case is that he did reclaim me ; but his reclamation did me no good, and the probability is, he did not intend it should. Joel Barlow and other Americans in Paris had been in a body to reclaim me, but their application, being unofficial, was not regarded. I then applied to Morris. I shall subpoena Morris, and if I get attested copies from the Secretary of State's office it will prove the lie on the inspectors.

"As it is a new generation that has risen up since the declaration of independence, they know nothing of what the political state of the country was at the time the pamphlet 'Common Sense' appeared ; and besides this there are but few of the old standers left, and none that I know of in this city.

"It may be proper at the trial to bring the mind of the court and the jury back to the times I am speaking of, and if you see no objection in your way, I wish you would write a letter to some person, stating, from your own knowledge, what the condition of those times were, and the effect which the work 'Common Sense,' and the several members of the 'Crisis' had upon the country. It would, I think, be best that the letter should begin directly on the subject in this manner : Being informed that Thomas Paine has been denied his rights of citizenship by certain persons acting as inspectors at an election at New Rochelle, &c.

"I have put the prosecution into the hands of Mr. Riker, district attorney, who can make use of the letter in his address to the Court and Jury. Your handwriting can be sworn to by persons here, if necessary. Had you been on the spot I should have subpoenaed you, unless it had been too inconvenient to you to have attended. Yours in friendship."

To this Clinton replied from Washington, 12th May, 1807 :

"DEAR SIR,—I had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 4th instant, yesterday ; agreeably to your request I have this day written a letter to Richard Riker, Esquire, which he

will show you. I doubt much, however, whether the Court will admit it to be read as evidence.

“I am indebted to you for a former letter. I can make no other apology for not acknowledging it before than inability to give you such an answer as I could wish. I constantly keep the subject in mind, and should any favorable change take place in the sentiments of the Legislature, I will apprize you of it.

“I am, with great esteem, your sincere friend.”

In the letter to Madison Paine tells the same story. At the end he says that Morris' reclamation was not out of any good will to him. “I know not what he wrote to the french minister; whatever it was he concealed it from me.” He also says Morris could hardly keep himself out of prison.<sup>1</sup>

A letter was also written to Joel Barlow, at Washington, dated Broome Street, New York, May 4th. He says in this :

“I have prosecuted the Board of Inspectors for disfranchising me. You and other Americans in Paris went in a body to the Convention to reclaim me, and I want a certificate from you, properly attested, of this fact. If you consult with Gov. Clinton he will in friendship inform you who to address it to.

“Having now done with business I come to meums and tuums. What are you about? You sometimes hear of me but I never hear of you. It seems as if I had got to be master of the feds and the priests. The former do not attack my political publications; they rather try to keep them out of sight by silence. And as to the priests, they act as if they would say, let us alone and we will let you alone. My Examination of the passages called prophecies is printed, and will be published next week. I have prepared it with the Essay on Dream. I do not believe that the priests will attack it, for it is not a book of opinions but of facts. Had the Christian Religion done any good in the world I would not have exposed it, how-

<sup>1</sup> The letter is in Mr. Frederick McGuire's collection of Madison papers.

ever fabulous I might believe it to be. But the delusive idea of having a friend at court whom they call a redeemer, who pays all their scores, is an encouragement to wickedness.

“What is Fulton about? Is he taming a whale to draw his submarine boat? I wish you would desire Mr. Smith to send me his country *National Intelligencer*. It is printed twice a week without advertisement. I am somewhat at a loss for want of authentic intelligence. Yours in friendship.”

It will be seen that Paine was still in ignorance of the conspiracy which had thrown him in prison, nor did he suspect that Washington had been deceived by Gouverneur Morris, and that his private letter to Washington might have been suppressed by Pickering.<sup>1</sup> It will be seen, by Madame

<sup>1</sup> It has been already surmised (ii., p. 174), that Washington's Secretary of State might have kept Paine's letter from the President, and thus prevented an answer, which might have led to an explanation. I had not then observed a reference to that letter by Madison, in writing to Monroe (April 7, 1796), which proves that Paine's communication to Washington had been read by Pickering. Monroe was anxious lest some attack on the President should be written by Paine while under his roof,—an impropriety avoided by Paine as we have seen,—and had written to Madison on the subject. Madison answers: “I have given the explanation you desired to F. A. M[uhlenberg], who has not received any letter as yet, and has promised to pay due regard to your request. It is proper you should know that Thomas Paine wrote some time ago a severe letter to the President which Pickering mentioned to me in harsh terms when I delivered a note from Thomas Paine to the Secretary of State, inclosed by T. P. in a letter to me. Nothing passed, however, that betrayed the least association of your patronage or attention to Thomas Paine with the circumstance; nor am I apprehensive that any real suspicion can exist of your countenancing or even knowing the steps taken by T. P. under the influence of his personal feelings or political principles. At the same time the caution you observe is by no means to be disapproved. Be so good as to let T. P. know that I have received his letter and handed his note to the Secretary of State, which requested copies of such letters as might have been written hence in his behalf. The note did not require any answer either to me or through me, and I have heard nothing of it since I handed it to Pickering.” At this time the Secretary of State's office contained the President's official recognition of Paine's citizenship; but this application for the papers relating to his imprisonment by a foreign power received no reply, though it was evidently couched in

Bonneville's and Jarvis' statements elsewhere, that Paine lost his case against Elisha Ward, on what ground it is difficult to imagine. The records of the Supreme Court, at Albany, and the Clerk's office at White Plains, have been vainly searched for any trace of this trial. Mr. John H. Riker, son of Paine's counsel, has examined the remaining papers of Richard Riker (many were accidentally destroyed) without finding anything related to the matter. It is so terrible to think that with Jefferson, Clinton, and Madison at the head of the government, and the facts so clear, the federalist Elisha Ward could vindicate his insult to Thomas Paine, that it may be hoped the publication of these facts will bring others to light that may put a better face on the matter.<sup>1</sup> Madame Bonneville may have mis-

respectful terms ; as the letter was open for the eye of Madison, who would not have conveyed it otherwise. It is impossible that Washington could have sanctioned such an outrage on one he had recognized as an American citizen. There is thus reason to believe that Timothy Pickering, as he had kept back a letter in the case of Randolph, intercepted that of Paine to Washington (Sept. 20, 1795), whose silence brought on him the public letter.

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Vale relates an anecdote which suggests that a reaction may have occurred in Elisha Ward's family : " At the time of Mr. Paine's residence at his farm, Mr. Ward, now a coffee-roaster in Gold Street, New York, and an assistant alderman, was then a little boy and residing at New Rochelle. He remembers the impressions his mother and some religious people made on him by speaking of *Tom* Paine, so that he concluded that *Tom* Paine must be a very bad and brutal man. Some of his elder companions proposed going into Mr. Paine's orchard to obtain some fruit, and he, out of fear, kept at a distance behind, till he beheld, with surprise, Mr. Paine come out and assist the boys in getting apples, patting one on the head and caressing another, and directing them where to get the best. He then advanced and received his share of encouragement, and the impression this kindness made on him determined him at a very early period to examine his writings. His mother at first took the books from him, but at a later period restored them to him, observing that he was then of an age to judge for himself ; perhaps she had herself been gradually undeceived, both as to his character and writings."



understood the procedure for which she had to pay costs, as Paine's legatee. Whether an ultimate decision was reached or not, the sufficiently shameful fact remains that Thomas Paine was practically disfranchised in the country to which he had rendered services pronounced pre-eminent by Congress, by Washington, and by every soldier and statesman of the Revolution.

Paine had in New York the most formidable of enemies,—an enemy with a newspaper. This was James Cheetham, of whom something has been said in the preface to this work (p. xvi.). In addition to what is there stated, it may be mentioned that Paine had observed, soon after he came to New York, the shifty course of this man's paper, *The American Citizen*. But it was the only republican paper in New York, supported Governor Clinton, for which it had reason, since it had the State printing,—and Colonel Fellows advised that Cheetham should not be attacked. Cheetham had been an attendant on Elihu Palmer's lectures, and after his participation in the dinner to Paine, his federalist opponent, the *Evening Post*, alluded to his being at Palmer's. Thereupon Cheetham declared that he had not heard Palmer for two years. In the winter of 1804 he casually spoke of Paine's "mischievous doctrines." In the following year, when Paine wrote the defence of Jefferson's personal character already alluded to, Cheetham omitted a reference in it to Alexander Hamilton's pamphlet, by which he escaped accusation of official defalcation by confessing an amorous intrigue.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I see that Cheetham has left out the part respecting Hamilton and

Cheetham having been wont to write of Hamilton as "the gallant of Mrs. Reynolds," Paine did not give much credit to the pretext of respect for the dead, on which the suppression was justified. He was prepared to admit that his allusion might be fairly suppressed, but perceived that the omission was made merely to give Cheetham a chance for vaunting his superior delicacy, and casting a suspicion on Paine. "Cheetham," wrote Paine, "might as well have put the part in, as put in the reasons for which he left it out. Those reasons leave people to suspect that the part suppressed related to some new discovered immorality in Hamilton worse than the old story."

About the same time with Paine, an Irishman came to America, and, after travelling about the country a good deal, established a paper in New York called *The People's Friend*. This paper began a furious onslaught on the French, professed to have advices that Napoleon meant to retake New Orleans, and urged an offensive alliance of the United States with England against France and Spain. These articles appeared in the early autumn of 1806, when, as we have seen, Paine was especially beset by personal worries. They made him frantic. His denunciations, merited as they

Mrs. Reynolds, but for my own part I wish it had been in. Had the story never been publicly told I would not have been the first to tell it; but Hamilton had told it himself, and therefore it was no secret; but my motive in introducing it was because it was applicable to the subject I was upon, and to show the revilers of Mr. Jefferson that while they are affecting a morality of horror at an unproved and unfounded story about Mr. Jefferson, they had better look at home and give vent to their horror, if they had any, at a real case of their own Dagon (*sic*) and his Delilah."—Paine to Colonel Fellows, July 31, 1805.

were, of this assailant of France reveal the unstrung condition of the old author's nerves. Duane, of the Philadelphia *Aurora*, recognized in Carpenter a man he had seen in Calcutta, where he bore the name of Cullen. It was then found that he had on his arrival in America borne the *alias* of Mac-cullen. Paine declared that he was an "emissary" sent to this country by Windham, and indeed most persons were at length satisfied that such was the case. Paine insisted that loyalty to our French alliance demanded Cullen's expulsion. His exposures of "the emissary Cullen" (who disappeared) were printed in a new republican paper in New York, *The Public Advertiser*, edited by Mr. Frank. The combat drew public attention to the new paper, and Cheetham was probably enraged by Paine's transfer of his pen to Frank. In 1807, Paine had a large following in New York, his friends being none the less influential among the masses because not in the fashionable world. Moreover, the very popular Mayor of New York, De Witt Clinton, was a hearty admirer of Paine. So Cheetham's paper suffered sadly, and he opened his guns on Paine, declaring that in the Revolution he (Paine) "had stuck very correctly to his pen in a safe retreat," that his "Rights of Man" merely repeated Locke, and so forth. He also began to denounce France and applaud England, which led to the belief that, having lost republican patronage, Cheetham was aiming to get that of England.

In a "Reply to Cheetham" (August 21st), Paine met personalities in kind. "Mr. Cheetham, in his rage for attacking everybody and everything that is

not his own (for he is an ugly-tempered man, and he carries the evidence of it in the vulgarity and forbiddingness of his countenance—God has set a mark upon Cain), has attacked me, etc.” In reply to further attacks, Paine printed a piece headed “Cheetham and his Tory Paper.” He said that Cheetham was discovering symptoms of being the successor of Cullen, *alias* Carpenter. “Like him he is seeking to involve the United States in a quarrel with France for the benefit of England.” This article caused a duel between the rival editors, Cheetham and Frank, which seems to have been harmless. Paine wrote a letter to the *Evening Post*, saying that he had entreated Frank to answer Cheetham’s challenge by declaring that he (Paine) had written the article and was the man to be called to account. In company Paine mentioned an opinion expressed by the President in a letter just received. This got into the papers, and Cheetham declared that the President could not have so written, and that Paine was intoxicated when he said so. For this Paine instituted a suit against Cheetham for slander, but died before any trial.

Paine had prevailed with his pen, but a terrible revenge was plotted against his good name. The farrier William Carver, in whose house he had lived, turned Judas, and concocted with Cheetham the libels against Paine that have passed as history.