

## THOMAS PAINE: DEIST OR QUAKER?

THE THESIS of Moncure D. Conway, Paine's most thorough and ardent biographer, that "he is explicable only by the intensity of his Quakerism" and that his "whole political system is explicable only by his theocratic Quakerism"<sup>2</sup> seems at first surprising to anyone who has read the *Age of Reason* in the light of the theories of Scientific Deism. Since Conway has been followed in this by other biographers and critics of Paine, it seems worthwhile to re-examine the evidence in an effort to determine the primary religious force acting on the revolutionary pamphleteer.

The issue lies squarely between Quakerism and Deism. Opposed to Conway is the opinion of Norman Sykes. "The interest which Paine displayed in religion was . . . an essential part of his political thought," he writes. "Its importance consists precisely in the circumstance that he was an almost perfect representative of the deist school."<sup>3</sup> Can the *Age of Reason* be shown to be an "almost perfect reproduction of the principles of deism of the early eighteenth century"<sup>4</sup> or does it reveal its author as "potential in George Fox?"<sup>5</sup> Paine himself wrote of the Quakers: "I am a descendant of a family of the profession; my father was a Quaker."<sup>6</sup> Yet it has been said that his father was disowned by the Society of Friends for being married by a priest. Once Paine professed himself a member of the English Church; and again he signed an anonymous article "A Member of the Deistical Church."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York, 1892), II. 201. Hereafter referred to as *Life*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 231. In another place (*The Writings of Thomas Paine*, II. 262) Conway reasserts his belief. "Paine's political principles were evolved out of his early Quakerism."

<sup>3</sup> N. Sykes, *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Revolutionary Era*, ed. by F. J. C. Earnshaw, Ch. V. "Thomas Paine," 128.

<sup>4</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.*, 131.

<sup>5</sup> *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. by M. D. Conway (New York, 1899), II. 161. Hereafter referred to as *Writings*.

<sup>6</sup> *Writings*, IV. 252.

<sup>7</sup> G. A. Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (New York, 1933) American Religion Series VII. 142 Mr. Koch says of this signature: "It indicates that he felt himself to be an active member of a genuinely religious organization."

A brief comparison of the main tenets of Deism and Quakerism will clear the ground for an understanding of Paine's position.<sup>8</sup> The keystone of the Quaker arch, it will be recalled, is the doctrine of an Inner Light which illumines every man. This Light is sometimes identified with conscience; sometimes with Christ.<sup>9</sup> "From the denial of the need of anyone to serve as mediator in attaining salvation, arising from their faith in the Inner Light, there resulted on the one hand their rejection of the clergy as a group set apart from the rest of the world, and on the other their insistence on the universal priesthood of believers."<sup>10</sup> The Quakers did not stress, nor did they repudiate, the Bible, but "the spirit and not the Scriptures is the rule."<sup>11</sup> " 'When I had openings,' says Fox, 'they answered one another, and answered the scriptures, for I had great openings of the scriptures.' "<sup>12</sup> Although the emphasis of the Quaker faith lay in its personal experience of God, the true followers early learned the "irresistible might of meekness" and humility and were taught to exercise true Justice and Goodness, not only toward all men, but also toward the brute Creatures."<sup>13</sup> In sum, then, the Quakers stood for direct mystical perception of God, diminishing importance of the Bible, and stress on inner reform reënforced by a heartfelt humanitarianism.

The distinguishing factor of Deism is its insistence on reason for its knowledge of God. "The rational realisation of the unfailing regularity of the universe gave men a joyful appreciation of the character of God as no longer arbitrary and capricious but rational and reliable."<sup>14</sup> The Creator who was, thus, "beneficent, orderly, and omnipotent" and who ruled by immutable laws a universe remarkable for its harmony and scientific arrangement could not possibly have been responsible for the anarchy and confusion which resulted from the "theological disputes derived from a diverse exegesis of the text of Holy Scripture."<sup>15</sup> The Bible was thrown aside by the deists as

<sup>8</sup> For a thorough contrast of the two beliefs as exhibited in Paine and Woolman see H. H. Clark, "An Historical Interpretation of Thomas Paine's Religion," *U. of Calif. Chron.* (Jan. 1933), 59-60.

<sup>9</sup> A. Jorns, *Studien über die Sozialpolitik der Quaker*, transl. by T. K. Brown (*The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work*, New York, 1931), Introd., 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> A. Jorns, *op. cit.*, Introd., 24.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> *The Journal and Other Writings: John Woolman*, Everyman ed. (New York, 1936), 22. Rufus M. Jones has characterized Woolman as "typical" of eighteenth century Quakerism.

<sup>14</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.*, 126.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

“an invention of the priesthood in order to enhance its own prestige.”<sup>16</sup> In its place was put external nature. The law of God “was plainly written in the order of nature.”<sup>17</sup> Man, sharing in this divine harmony, could be nothing but “naturally” good, and evil was shown to exist only in outward institutions. As a substitute for prayer, therefore, the deists stressed humanitarianism, by which they meant an eradication of the evils which existed around man in order to leave him free to wallow in an excess of his own goodness. In the following ways deism corroborated Quakerism:<sup>18</sup> (1) emphasis on the right of private judgment for every man; (2) corresponding disregard of priests or mediators; (3) diminished emphasis on the Bible; (4) humanitarianism. In these ways the two sects diverged: (1) the Quaker placed the perception of God in the heart; the deist in the intellect; (2) the Quaker stressed service to fellow men by reforming them within and teaching them to perceive the “indwelling Spirit” of Christ. The inner life “was to him the real domain of interest.”<sup>19</sup> The deist, on the other hand, “tended to see our central conflict as outer rather than inner, a conflict between naturally good men and monarchical and ecclesiastic institutions.”<sup>20</sup> (3) The Quaker had to “take heed” lest he “depart from the Channel of the true Gospel-Ministry”;<sup>21</sup> the deist, as we have seen, threw out the Bible as the fiction of grasping priests.

With these basic divergencies in mind we may turn to the *Age of Reason*. Let us not overlook, as our first clue to Paine’s religion, the title of his book. “It is only by the exercise of reason,” he says later on, “that man can discover God. Take away that reason, and he would be incapable of understanding anything.”<sup>22</sup> Of mystery, generally thought the antithesis of reason,<sup>23</sup> Paine is characteristically outspoken. “Mystery is the antagonist of truth. . . . Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God, and the practice of moral truth cannot have connection with mystery.”<sup>24</sup> From these observations Paine discusses the question of revelation.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> C. Jorgenson, *Benjamin Franklin*, cxxvii of the *Introd.* writes: “The effort of deism to simplify religion was historically shared by Quakerism.”

<sup>19</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>21</sup> Woolman’s *Journal*, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Writings*, IV, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Defined by Webster’s *New Collegiate Dictionary*, 5th ed. as “an article of faith beyond human comprehension.”

<sup>24</sup> *Writings*, IV, 76.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate any thing to man, by any mode of speech, in any language or by any kind of vision, or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation. . . .

Thus through reason, Paine establishes the creation as the only reliable source of our knowledge of God. "The creation is the Bible of the deist,"<sup>26</sup> he says in a memorable sentence. In this creation, furthermore, man "reads in the handwriting of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power."<sup>27</sup> "[All] other Bibles and Testaments are" to Paine "forgeries."<sup>28</sup> Referring constantly to "the book called the Bible," Paine concludes that "it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the Word of God."<sup>29</sup> On the question of service to fellow men, Paine writes as follows: "It is as if he [i.e. "the Almighty"] had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours, 'I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, and learn from my munificence to all, to be kind to each other.'"<sup>30</sup>

Thus Paine appears to be in harmony with most of the principles of Deism and distinguished from those of the Quakers. To supplement this evidence, however, let us turn to some of his statements which treat more directly the two beliefs. Although he nowhere states outright, as Franklin does, that he was a "thorough Deist," Paine speaks of the religion always in terms of intimate sympathy. Attacking the orthodox doctrine of redemption, which he calls the "christian story of God the Father putting his son to death or employing people to do it," Paine bursts forth in praise of the deist: "How different is this to the pure and simple profession of Deism!"<sup>31</sup> Again he writes: "The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple deism."<sup>32</sup> Again: "Deism then teaches us without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known."<sup>33</sup>

Although it is true, on the other hand, that Paine speaks sympa-

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 189. "We can know God only through his works" (*Ibid.*, 191).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Writings*, IV, 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

thetically of the Quakers he not only keeps his distance from pure Quakerism, but even displays ignorance of their creed:<sup>34</sup>

The religion that approaches the nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the quakers: but they have contracted themselves too much by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I can not help smiling at the conceit, that if the taste of a quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been!

Paine leaves no doubt of his sympathies in this statement, but further than that the point of view, the whole attitude of the writer, is un-Quaker. There is a worldliness and egotism in the condescending smile here bestowed on the Friends which is the direct antithesis of the meekness and humility we find in Fox or Woolman. Paine, who was nicknamed Citizen Egotism may have had "some of the light," but assuredly he had "none of the sweetness"<sup>35</sup> of the Quaker persuasion.<sup>36</sup> With his characteristic overstatement he speaks out in bold ignorance of the Quaker attitude toward the Bible:<sup>37</sup>

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers, and the only reason that can be given for it is, that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter.

Yet we have continual references among the pure Quakers to the "inner Light of Christ" and to the authority, albeit restricted authority, of the Scriptures. We have Fox's repeated testimony in the *Journal*, after he had spoken to a group of people with particular success, that "the Scriptures were opened to them"<sup>38</sup> and Woolman's that from the "revelation of the Spirit of God to the saints, have proceeded the Scriptures of Truth."<sup>39</sup> The Quakers are wrongly

<sup>34</sup> *Writings*, IV. 65-66.

<sup>35</sup> I. W. Riley, *American Philosophy* (New York, 1907), 298.

<sup>36</sup> See also on this point Clark, *op. cit.*, 59. Mr. Clark writes: "Whereas Quakers such as Woolman were distinguished by 'the irresistible might of meekness and humility, Paine was an arch egotist, arrogantly critical of others, and distinguished by an overwhelming pride in himself and his achievement.'"

<sup>37</sup> *Writings*, IV. 185-86.

<sup>38</sup> See *George Fox, An Autobiography*, ed. by R. M. Jones (Philadelphia, 1903), I. 158. "After I had declared the truth to them for some hours, and the meeting was ended, the chief constable and some other professors fell to reasoning with me in the chapel yard. Whereupon I took a Bible and opened the Scriptures. . . . They that were in the Light of Christ and spirit of God knew when I spoke Scripture, though I did not mention chapter and verse, after the priest's form, to them."

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Clark, *op. cit.*, 59. Also *cf.* note 21,

represented when they are said to regard the Scriptures as “a dead letter.”

We must at this point look back to Conway’s original argument that Paine is “explicable only” in terms of Quakerism. The theory seems stretched in the light of the deistic attitude of Paine throughout the *Age of Reason*, not to mention his other works. Conway, however, has a further, even more ingenious argument, for his faith in Paine’s Quakerism. He says—and not without some justification—that “Paine’s ‘Reason’ is only an expansion of the Quakers’ ‘inner light.’”<sup>40</sup> To test this statement let us compare Paine’s own definition of Reason with a definition of the Quaker inner light. Paine, speaking in praise of Deism, writes: That religion “honours Reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation.”<sup>41</sup> Following John Locke in his *Essay on the Human Understanding* Paine identifies Reason with the senses or “natural faculties” capable of perceiving the Creator in *outward* things. In contrast to this a recent writer describes the Quaker inner light as being “a direct and living inbreathing of some measure of the breath of His [*i.e.* God’s] own Life . . . a witness in the heart . . . of man . . . and the Divine Voice speaking within us. . . .”<sup>42</sup> And William Penn in his *Primitive Christianity Revived* speaks of it as “something that is Divine, and though in man yet not of man, but of God . . . the Spirit given to every man to profit withal, the truth in the inward part, the spiritual leaven that leavens the whole lump of man.”<sup>43</sup> It seems clear that the Quaker belief is mystical and non-sensory, quite the opposite of Paine’s conception of Reason.

Conway attempts further to show that it “appears clear from several allusions in *The Age of Reason* to the Quakers that in his [*i.e.*, Paine’s] early life, or before the middle of the eighteenth century, the people so-called were substantially Deists.”<sup>44</sup> Here Conway has followed Paine himself in a misconception of some of the basic Quaker doctrines. He believes, with Paine, that the Quakers “are rather Deists than Christians” and that “they call the scriptures a dead letter.” In a footnote appended to this statement of Paine, Con-

<sup>40</sup> *Writings*, IV. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>42</sup> Caroline E. Stephen, author of *Quaker Strongholds*. Lines quoted by W. T. Shore, *John Woolman: His Life and Our Times* (London, 1913), 12.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>44</sup> *Writings*, IV. 4.

way says: "This is an interesting and correct testimony as to the beliefs of the earlier Quakers, one of whom was Paine's father."<sup>45</sup> Yet we have George Fox's own words in which he refers to the Scriptures as anything but "a dead letter"; and if Fox, the founder of the sect, may be taken to represent "the beliefs of the earlier Quakers," both Paine and "his partisan editor"<sup>46</sup> were wrong. Furthermore, the connection of Paine's father with the orthodox Quakers has been shown to be a dubious one.

Following quite a different line of reasoning, Conway attempts further to support his thesis by identifying Paine's Quaker beliefs with those of Elias Hicks who in 1827 headed the "Great Separation" of the Hicksites from the orthodox Quakers. "There appears to me no doubt that . . . the rationalistic wing of the Quakers in America (Hicksites) were founded by 'The Age of Reason' and the controversies raised by it."<sup>47</sup> This interesting relationship will be worth a moment's attention, since there is evidence that Conway is not without justification for it. Let us examine some aspects of the Hicksite movement to determine precisely how "rationalistic" it was, and what evidence there is for the assertion that it evolved from the *Age of Reason*.

In the *Journal* and letters of Elias Hicks there are statements which parallel remarkably some of Thomas Paine's. Of revelation, Hicks writes: "God has given to every man and woman a complete and sufficient rule of faith and practice without the aid of books or men."<sup>48</sup> On the same subject Paine writes: "Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to anything done upon earth of which man is himself the actor or the witness,"<sup>49</sup> and "human language . . . is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man."<sup>50</sup> Of the Scriptures Hicks suggests that "God could easily 'qualify some of His faithful servants to write Scriptures . . . as good and as competent for the generation in which they lived, and likely much better than those wrote so many years since.'<sup>51</sup> Paine says of the Scriptures: "Search not the book called the scripture, which any human hand might make. . . ."<sup>52</sup> To Elias Hicks a "hireling minister

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>46</sup> Riley, *op. cit.*, 298.

<sup>47</sup> *Writings*, IV, 260.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, (London, 1921), I, 450. Hereafter referred to as *Later Periods*.

<sup>49</sup> *Writings*, IV, 33.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted by Jones, *Later Periods*, I, 449.

<sup>52</sup> *Writings*, IV, 46.

is the prodigal son; what he preaches is husks; the people who listen are the swine."<sup>53</sup> To Paine a priest "wants nothing but his [*i.e.*, a person's] money and then to riot in the spoil and laugh at his credulity,"<sup>54</sup> and he believes that "no man ought to make a living by religion."<sup>55</sup> Both Hicks and Paine agree in discrediting the doctrine of hereditary sin through Adam's fall.

These similarities in belief are striking but misleading. Though the two men reach many like conclusions, they start from opposite poles and disagree fundamentally in their basic religions. Elias Hicks, a "vigorous, dynamic individual,"<sup>56</sup> began as an orthodox Quaker but soon felt the need for his sect to have some more concrete theology with which to combat "the deistical questionings of the age." "He declares again and again that . . . he builds no hopes at all on man in his 'natural condition.'"<sup>57</sup>

My mind [he writes in his *Journal*] was brought into a state of deep exercise and travail, from a sense of . . . the prevailing of a spirit of great infidelity and deism among the people, and darkness spreading over the minds of many as a thick veil. It was a time in which Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* (falsely so called) was much attended to . . . and some who were members of our Society . . . were captivated by his dark insinuating address.<sup>58</sup>

These are hardly the words of one whose religion was to be "founded by the *Age of Reason*!" Yet in the effort of combatting Deism "Hicks himself built up a very elaborate, complex, and intricate body of counter-doctrines . . . which turned out to be as foreign to first-hand experience, as much a construction of logical reason . . . as were the notions and doctrines against which he was a determined opponent."<sup>59</sup>

Hicks thus represents a paradox. It was his insistence on the importance of the Inner Light which led him to many of the conclusions of the deists. He "differed from other Friends in this particular, that he did not veer from a straight course."<sup>60</sup> If the Inner Light is sufficient to reveal the Word of God, he argued, using the reasoning of a Paine, then the Quakers need rely on nothing else. He broke from orthodoxy because the vigor and logic with which he supported the basic Quaker doctrines sounded like heresy to those who had

<sup>53</sup> Jones, *Later Periods*, I. 446.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Writings*, IV. 250.

<sup>56</sup> Jones, *Later Periods*, I. 457.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Jones, *Later Periods*, I. 443.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

never thought them through to their inevitable conclusions. "For a whole generation," says Rufus Jones, "the Society had tacked, like a ship sailing against the wind, in a curious zig-zag, back and forth from Scripture to inner light and from inner light to Scripture."<sup>61</sup> Hicks relied solely on the light within, but by applying reason to the ill-defined Quaker theology he seemed to be arguing for the Deists.

Thus it is easy to perceive how Conway, seeing the conclusions of the Hicksites and overlooking the basis from which they sprang, could identify the Inner Light of Hicks with the Reason of Tom Paine, although they were essentially at opposite poles. "We must not plead and reason as finite creatures," says Hicks, "we must be wholly passive to the divine Light."<sup>62</sup> In his *Journal* he writes: "My mind was much engaged to turn the attention of the people, and from all dependence on anything without them, to the inward principle of divine light and truth."<sup>63</sup> These are not the principles of the deist who turns his eyes outward to the creation and depends solely on reason.

In view of all the evidence, therefore, it seems safe to conclude that "the creed of Paine" was not Quakerism but "the purest deism"<sup>64</sup> and that Deism and Quakerism were not the same thing. "Paine shows," writes I. W. Riley, "that his Quaker antecedents have been left far behind, that the voice in the soul has been succeeded"<sup>65</sup> by the reiteration of "the familiar theistic arguments."<sup>66</sup>

We must not conclude from the foregoing that there was none of the Quaker spirit in Paine. Although he did not accept Quakerism as a religion, there was much in his social views which reflects his contact and sympathy with the Society of Friends. "I reverence their Philanthropy,"<sup>67</sup> he had said. Again he wrote: "The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers." It is significant, however, that to this he adds: "and the only reason that can be given for it is, that they are rather Deists than Christians."<sup>68</sup> We have already noticed the

<sup>61</sup> Jones, *Later Periods*, I. 457.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>64</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.*, 125.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 303. It is perhaps worth noting that Riley has disagreed with Conway on these same grounds. "Paine's editor," he says, "considers his 'reason' only an expansion of the Quakers' inner light; it might better be called a mere reflection of current deism"; *ibid.*, 299.

<sup>67</sup> *Writings*, IV. 66. For remainder of this quotation see note 34.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>65</sup> Riley, *op. cit.*, 301.

distinguishing factors in the humanitarianism of the Deists as opposed to that of the Quakers. The Deists held that the only service to God lay in imitating His works on earth. This implied service to fellow men by establishing order and harmony in external institutions. The Quakers, on the other hand, felt that if they did it unto the least of men on earth, they did it unto Christ. They went about their reforms in a quiet way attempting rather to convince men inwardly of evil than to cure it in the halls of Congress. John Woolman, when visiting with his friends, often "felt uneasy" when he "ate, drank, and lodged at free-cost, with People who lived in Ease on the hard Labour of their Slaves" and he "frequently had Conversation with them, in private, concerning it."<sup>69</sup>

In viewing Paine as a social reformer, we can see in him, I think, both of these differing points of view. While as a scientific deist he sought through practical inventions "to do good" in an external way,<sup>70</sup> as a Quaker he humanely opposed capital punishment and "hazarded his life, in a gesture fraught with historic irony, in defense of the head of Louis Capet."<sup>71</sup> In the midst of Paine's speech defending Louis XVI (read in the French Assembly by a deputy), Marat, the great revolutionary, rose and interrupted in much agitation: "I submit that Thomas Paine is incompetent to vote on this question; being a Quaker his religious principles are opposed to capital punishment."<sup>72</sup> While he had enough courage of his convictions to enter the War of Independence in hope of wiping out the governmental tyranny of England and wrote in July, 1775: "I am thus far a Quaker, that I would gladly lay aside the use of arms . . . but unless the whole world wills, the matter ends, and I take up my musket, and thank heaven he has put it in my power";<sup>73</sup> yet twelve years later, disillusioned that a war for freedom had overlooked the slaves, he spoke out in "Prospects on the Rubicon," against war and advocated disarmament and a league of nations. And still later in one of the "Prospect Papers" he seems to be even more convinced that the "established principle with the Quakers not to shed blood" is a good one.<sup>74</sup> In his views

<sup>69</sup> Woolman's *Journal*, *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>70</sup> For this I am indebted to an unpublished article of Professor H. H. Clark, "The Influence of Science on American Liberal Ideas of the Late 18th Century."

<sup>71</sup> V. F. Calverton, "Thomas Paine: God-Intoxicated Revolutionary," *Scribner's* (Jan., 1934), 15.

<sup>72</sup> *Writings*, III. 125.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 55.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 308.

on education Paine again seems to have some of the Quaker point of view.<sup>75</sup> Paine was a lifelong advocate of extending the educational system. "The Quakers," he said, ". . . are remarkable for their care of the poor of their society. They are equally as remarkable for the education of their children. I am a descendant of a family of that profession . . . and I presume I may be admitted an evidence of what I assert."<sup>76</sup>

As editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* Paine had written many articles urging reform. One of the first causes which "moved his heart and pen was that of the negro slave."<sup>77</sup> While it is true both Deist and Quaker believed in the equality of men, the character of this and other of his essays bespeaks a humaneness and feeling which argue a Quaker influence at least in part. An incident recorded by Paine in the *Age of Reason*, which seems to bear this out, is that of hearing "when about seven or eight years of age" a sermon on the subject of redemption. Paine says he "revolted at the recollection" of what he had heard and thought to himself "that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way." These reflections, he says, arose "from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it."<sup>78</sup> Such a feeling, it appears, sprang from Paine's early Quaker environment

<sup>75</sup> This needs important qualification. A study in itself sufficient for a paper of this length, the Quaker attitude toward education, though much has been written of it, appears to have had certain definite limitations. Though both Fox and William Penn had enthusiastic ideas about educating the Quaker children, their plans were never very elaborately carried out (See A. Jorns, *op. cit.*, 108 ff.). Quaker education may be said to have had a threefold purpose: (1) to educate as many of their children as possible; (2) to stress moral conduct, temperance, and obedience; (3) to emphasize utilitarian subjects with a view toward educating the poorer children to become useful citizens. Its limitations lay in the facts that they discouraged higher education, believed every man (through the inward light) was capable of educating himself, at least in part, and limited their activities pretty much to their own sects. (See W. C. Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, I, esp. pp. 294-95 and R. M. Jones, *Quakers in Am. Col.*, Introd. xxvii ff. and 570 ff.)

Thomas Paine with his deistic theories of scientific education (in order the better to see God in a study of his works) would not have subscribed to many of the Quaker education principles. (See H. H. Clark, unpublished MS., "The Influence of Science on American Liberal Ideas of the Late 18th Century." Also Paine's *Writings*, IV. 191-94 and 236-40.) With his usual misconception of the true Quaker ideals, however, Paine was enthusiastic in his praise of the Friends' educational efforts.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>77</sup> Conway, *Life*, I. 51.

<sup>78</sup> *Writings*, IV. 64-65.

before he had come under the influence of the deistic philosophy. On the same subject, the redemption of man through the death of Christ, Paine later speaks in connection with the Quakers:<sup>79</sup>

It is an established principle with the Quakers not to shed blood he says: suppose then all Jerusalem had been Quakers when Christ lived, there would have been nobody to crucify him, and in that case, if man is redeemed by his blood, which is the belief of the Church, there could have been no redemption.

Among other reforms he spoke for, Paine pleaded for kindness to animals, urged justice for women,<sup>80</sup> exposed the absurdities of duelling, advocated old-age pensions and national copyright laws, and opposed property inequalities and the principle of primogeniture.<sup>81</sup> In short, it is as a humanitarian reformer that Paine most of all shows Quaker influences. "My religion," he wrote, "is to do good."<sup>82</sup> His genuine sympathy with the oppressed went further with him than the cold reason of the pure Deist might be expected to carry him. "Of the two strands," writes a sound critic,<sup>83</sup> "his socialism was probably more important than his individualism." If, as we have attempted to show, Paine's social ideas were motivated at least in part by his Quaker background, then we may safely conclude that through him Quakerism had a part in thawing some of the harshness of the Puritan mind and contributing to the growth of liberal thought in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>80</sup> In this respect it may be suggested (though without immediate documentary proof) that the Quakers went further than the Deists. Women were admitted on an equal plane with men and did their share in passing on the Word of God through the Inner Light. The prominence of many women of Quaker faith since the beginning of its history bears this out.

<sup>81</sup> For fuller treatment of these reforms of Paine see Conway, *Life*, I. 45 ff. and Calverton, *op. cit.*, 20. For original works see *Writings*, I (ed. Conway).

<sup>82</sup> *Writings*, II. 472.

<sup>83</sup> Sykes, *op. cit.*, 138.