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THOMAS PAINE.

[LECTURE DELIVERED BY REV. W. E. COPELAND, UNITY CHURCH, SALEM, ORE.]

Many object to my setting apart one Sunday to honor Thomas Paine. I do this purposely. Paine has been made by the unchristian churches (called Evangelical,) to do duty as the lay figure, which each clergyman and theological student may decorate with such robes of falsehood and abuse as his fancy may dictate. With few exceptions for over one hundred years, orthodox theologians have never ceased to sneer at Tom Paine, to describe in glowing fiery terms the awful death bed of the great infidel; by the way a description which has nothing in common with the reality, and this reminds me to say that I have been present at the death bed of a number of infidels and I have never yet found one, who had any fear about the future; their dying has been like the falling asleep of a child. As a rule infidels die with less terror than earnest believers, and this was as true of Paine as of other unbelievers. One would suppose after the exhaustive lives of Paine, which have been published, especially Conways, the bigots would cease their reiteration of exploded romance, but they say the same things over again, with no qualification, showing an ignorance which stamps them as no trustworthy guides for people. We expect of a man, whom we employ to teach us, and who has been specially educated to that end, that he will at least keep himself informed of every advance made in thought and that he will correct old errors when they have been proven to be errors yet the average orthodox preacher goes over the same old story in blissful ignorance, that it has been totally disproved. Every year and many times a year, especially when there is a revival in progress, the audience is pointed to Tom Paine as an awful example of the terrible effects of infidelity, poor, drunken, dirty, frightened Tom Paine; when the truth is Mr. Paine was no more dirty than many other snuff takers, that he was exceptionally temperate, that he had no fear of the future. I have proven the falsity of these statements again and again, and my words were hardly uttered before the same old fables were repeated. This simply shows friends, what kind of a disease orthodoxy is. This is the most terrible spiritual disease, which can effect humanity. Whatever comes to me I hope that I may be spared the supreme calamity of becoming orthodox. Orthodoxy entirely para-

lyzes the moral sense, and its unfortunate victim can no longer distinguish between right and wrong, truth and error in its blind adherence to the letter of the Hebrew bible and the articles of its creed.

Orthodoxy has lost the power of detecting that word of God, which is fresh every morning and every evening. Repeating the old creeds and old commands, it makes so much noise that it cannot hear that voice of God which aroused the prophets to clear everything in the interest of truth and religious freedom and which speaks today as it spoke in olden time, for the father will never desert his child.

The school of the prophet has never been closed, the Bath, Kol or Voice of God has never been silenced, the book of Revelations has never been closed; orthodoxy so bewilders the mind, that the orthodox resolutely refuse to listen to those other prophets, whom God raises up in every age, and so confuses the senses that the faithful cannot hear the still small voice of God speaking in the silence of the heart.

Another peculiarity of the war against Paine, is its utter groundlessness. Thomas Paine is by no means so great an infidel, as many today, who are professors in Theological schools; Prebyterian Theological schools at that, and preachers in pulpits belonging to orthodox churches. He was a devout worshipper of a personal God, whom he conceived of, as too perfect, lofty and good, for the Hebrew bible to be his word, and now great scholars are telling us that much of the bible is purely of human origin and written by men of a low order of development, not so far advanced as the Persians, Egyptians and Hindoos. Scholars, whose christianity none dare impune, tell us that we are not to accept every word of the bible as God's word, indeed not every word of the New Testament; that we must decide what parts of the bible are from God. The infidelity for which Paine is so severely condemned, is now openly taught by christian professors, under whose direction is to be presently published the polychrome bible which will sort out one part of a given book from another, giving a hint of the origin which can be seen at a glance by the color.

Quite an important part of christendom now accept as truth, what Paine taught in his "Age of Reason." But some say, he is so

coarse and vulgar in this much condemned and little read attack on the hypocrisy of his day. Read other books published in those days and you will soon learn that the coarseness belonged to the age and not the man. Who is this Tom Paine against whom the orthodox rage so blindly and all the more furiously because blindly? What place in the world's gallery of portraits is filled by Tom Paine? What was done by Paine that some can find no words too harsh for his condemnation and others no words too laudatory to sound his honor? Of course his claim to honor especially rests upon his services in the cause of the freedom from British tyranny of the thirteen colonies, though he served freedom the world over. What was done by Mr. Thomas Paine for American liberty which gave him so high a rank among the fathers? Not one in a hundred of those who sneer at Tom Paine, know that his pamphlet, "Common Sense" was the Toesin, which awakened in the American people a determination to be free, and which was the guide to show them the way to that freedom we so highly prize. Few remember that when the Colonial Army, short of provisions, short of clothes, short of ammunition, was almost in despair, that Paine's Crisis aroused them to bear their deprivations a little longer. All seem to have forgotten that when the treasury was empty and it was evident that peace must be obtained on any terms, Mr. Thomas Paine started a subscription, giving all he had in the world, which subscription soon filled the treasury, clothed the army, secured rations and ammunition, and not very long after peace on such terms as the Americans dictated. It is not saying too much, in the light of history, to assert that no man, not even Washington, made so great sacrifices and accomplished so much for American liberty as did Mr. Thomas Paine.

Whosoever has any patriotism should find his pulse quickened, as he thinks of the author here, of the revolution. "Grand Tom Paine" said the volunteers as around their camp fires they eagerly read the last number of the Crisis. "Noble Tom Paine" was heard on every side, as he offered all that he had on the altar of American freedom. But such is the venom of orthodoxy, that now all which is said of this patriot is "Drunken Tom Paine," no recollection of his great services remaining. Against this injustice I will ever protest.

So long as orthodoxy continues its venomous and libelous attacks upon a man, to whom more than to any one man, America owes her independence, for Paine's pen was as mighty as the sword of Washington; it is right that lovers of justice and right take occasion to let the truth be known. Paine's services to the cause of American liberty were very great and were so acknowledged by that galaxy of brilliant men the signers of the declaration of independence. Rarely if ever has the United States government placed a man of war at the service of a private citizen; yet this was done for Thomas Paine. Washington did not offer the hospitality of Mt. Vernon to dirty drunken profligates, yet this honor was offered to Thomas Paine. Neither colonial legislatures or congress were profuse in gifts or praise in those early days, yet both were given to Thomas Paine. When he arrived at Paris the Marquis de La Fayette gave to him, with the request that he send it to Washington, the key of the Bastille, which meant so much to lovers of liberty of both continents. Lafayette the perfect French gentleman placed this key in the custody of Thomas Paine, who with Jefferson had prepared the Declaration of Independence; to Paine a creature who according to orthodoxy was sunk so low as hardly to be above the level of the brutes; but by La Fayette deemed worthy of the great honor of taking across the ocean the symbol of civil and religious tyranny, a gift from the French to the American Republic. Paine not returning at the time expected, gave the treasure to Rutledge. When Munroe had secured a treaty which was advantageous to both countries, he selected Thomas Paine as the one best suited to take the precious document to the United States, but the National Assembly would not grant leave of absence to a valued member. After his release from prison Paine was an inmate of Munroe's house, meeting there as elegant a body of gentlemen and ladies as assembled in Paris. There were many times, during Paine's residence in Paris, when but for him there would have been short shrift for both Americans and English, and more than once the American minister had to appeal to Paine for help.

No other American citizen had so great an opportunity to represent the true American spirit of liberty as was given to Thomas Paine be-

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